[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 1/?

- Jun. 30th, 2011 at 10:48 AM

Here's a bit of an experiment. If this goes well I might do it again.

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 1/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG.
Warnings: Minor violence.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam.
Word Count: 2,533 words.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: The basic premise was Gabriel as a cyborg. I went from there, and after

world-building with myself, **_bluebells** and **synnerxx**, I've got a plotbunny that's eating me.

Warning! This is a WIP and at the moment I have a vague idea of where the plot's going, I *think* the pairing is going to be Gabriel/Castiel (this might change), and beyond that? Who knows! More is coming, I just need to write it. And when it's all done I'll come back here and edit a proper title in and whatnot. (This also serves as motivation for me to finish this, as I really hate it when I write WIPs and horror of horrors, post them without finishing them.)

If you're cool with that, then, read on!

Smooth metal, stark white everywhere, the only splash of life - of color - the golden eyes. Golden eyes opening.

Instantly he pulls his hand back, stops touching the white. "I - " What *can* he say? He falters. He's never been this close to an archangel before.

Automatically his mind corrects him as he steps back. It's not an archangel, it's more properly known as an archangel-class cyborg, one of the originals, one of the most erratic - dangerous - ones.

Sam really shouldn't be here.

And before him, the archangel-class cyborg with the name of Gabriel is still

immobile. The only hint that the cyborg is active is his eyes. Sam's being watched.

Sam clears his throat and tries again.

"S - Sorry. I'll go."

There's a brief noise, something like a whir, and then white fingers close around his wrist. Gabriel's touch is cool but rapidly warming up to room temperature, and Sam's mind really needs to stop taking in all of the little details when the archangel is right in front of him, leaning in, its golden gaze boring into Sam's eyes as if it could read his mind.

Sam can't remember if archangels can read minds, or if that was something added to the later models of cyborgs. He swallows again and doesn't dare to move.

Gabriel cocks his head and Sam has to blink, is that a smile on the archangel's face?

"Oh, this is interesting," and the archangel's voice is normal. No breathy sounds, none of the awkward phrasing characteristic of primitive models, in fact if Sam heard it without visual reference he would think he was talking to a human.

There's a brief squeaking sound, and Sam realizes that he made it. He admits it to himself, he is terrified. He's *seen* what archangel-class cyborgs can do first-hand, and none of the curiosity he has is helping with the fact that there is a weapon gripping his wrist and studying his face.

"I, um, I should go," Sam says, quickly. "I've got - stuff, work to do."

"Sure, go on," Gabriel says with something more dangerous than a smile on his face. "Something to keep in mind for next time, Sam Winchester: we don't sleep, or ever turn off."

He lets go of Sam, one finger at a time, and steps back. Sam backs out of the room, quick as he can, and the second the door swishes closed in front of him, Sam breaks into a run away from the room housing the archangel. He curses himself in his head, telling himself that what he just did was *stupid*, that he should have thought long and hard before sneaking in there -

Senior technician or not he feels very much like a chastised child when he gets outside.

Castiel is still human enough inside to feel trepidation when he receives his assignment, but he isn't human enough to show it. His hands do not tremble and he indicates that he received and will carry out this order without delay.

Not that he is leaving immediately. He has time enough to finish recharging, maintenance and to even replace his weaponry before he must be on the roof and ready to leave.

He reviews the orders once more.

EHU #00A "Castiel" -
Your orders are to accompany WCA #00C "Gabriel" on Flight Path 47. Be ready to leave by the fourth bell.

Castiel tells himself not to be nervous. It's another assignment, and they are all professional when it comes to business. He does not need to fear Gabriel.

Still, the time he has before he must go passes all too quickly and he is ascending the steps to the roof. He has a moment of disappointment that Gabriel isn't there already, and instead goes to the rails, looking out across the landscape. It's nothing more than a college in appearance, and he is surprised by that every time.

Castiel often wonders that because he was not made in the usual way, that if his human...heritage, for lack of a better word, colors his judgement in too extreme a fashion. He should not be startled by seeing that the layout of this facility resembles a college, and he should not be startled at the flash of not-memory that surges through him. And while he may wonder at this, he will record his thoughts and observations for his next report.

He checks the time. Gabriel suddenly seems a lot less intimidating, as he is two minutes late. It is *never* proper to arrive to assignments late. Unless, of course, Gabriel has a good reason, but - Castiel pushes down the unwanted surge of indignation, and annoyance.

Abruptly there are fingers tapping his shoulder and he whirls around.

It's Gabriel. Gleaming white and silver as always, looking as perfect as always, and those eerie golden eyes locked onto Castiel's own.

"Castiel, right?"

Castiel dips his chin in a nod, unsure of what to say now. He can't ask why Gabriel was late, he can't even think of such a thing. It explains why the archangels are given so much free reign.

"Ready to go?"

Gabriel still hasn't broken his stare, and Castiel is beginning to feel nerves again. He lets it show, just a little bit, in the tightness of his face. He reminds himself that he can't suppress all of his emotions, and is not expected to. (Wasn't built with the capability to, unlike some of his more robotic brethren.)

"Then come on, and don't look so nervous," Gabriel says, and slaps Castiel's

shoulder. Castiel cannot help but straighten at it. "Loosen up, Path 47 is a breeze. Nice and uneventful, except when you're about to get bored."

And then, just as abruptly, Gabriel's wings are unfurling behind him with flashes of light as the silver catches in the sun, and he is taking off. Castiel hurries to follow him up into the air, his own wings silver behind him. (Usually they are black, toned with blue and speckled with white to match the night sky, but today they are silver, the better to fit in with the sunlight in the early morning.)

For a collection of minutes Castiel tails Gabriel, not yet ready to pull up alongside him and certainly unwilling to shoot past him with a burst of speed. Then Gabriel abruptly brakes in the air, his wings flapping a complicated figure-eight pattern as he hovers in place, perfectly motionless except for his wings. Castiel stops next to him, awed by the precision even though he is capable of a hover that is perfectly adequate for staying in one place. Gabriel shifts two inches to the left and looks at Castiel, meeting his eyes again, and does Gabriel know how unnerving his stare is? Castiel tries staring back this time with his own intent, and Gabriel laughs low and amused between them.

"I've been curious about you for a while, Castiel." Gabriel says, after a beat. "So I thought this would be a good opportunity to get to know you."

Castiel opens his mouth, and closes it. What does he say to that? Is he honored by the attention? Annoyed? What would be appropriate to say?

He settles for the most surprising of Gabriel's revelations.

"You had a hand in my assignment?" There's more to this question that Castiel doesn't voice, questions like *You can influence the assignments? Isn't that forbidden? What authority do you have?*

Gabriel cocks his head, studying him again.

Then he nods and smiles, wide and bright. "Yeah, alright, I'll let you in on the secret."

"What were you going to say if you hadn't made that decision?" Castiel can't help but ask.

Gabriel waves a hand. "You're not stupid enough to talk if I tell you not to share anything. So fly with me while we talk."

And Gabriel takes off at a leisurely pace, gesturing for Castiel to follow. Castiel does, looking out over the landscape as he does, glad to see that they are beyond the limits of home by now. It doesn't occur to him to marvel at how fast they can fly, or how far they can go in such a short time, but he feels relief at knowing that if there is a battle here, there are no innocents below to get hurt in the crossfire.

It's not long before he looks to Gabriel again, waiting for answers.

"I don't like that it has to remain confidential," Gabriel says, "But here's the truth. Archangels often get involved in the entire assignments process, and Michael in fact is orchestrating a large part of the movements of the army overall. Sure, we've got humans to work with who can veto plans if they have a good reason to, but for every general you hear praise for, there's most likely Michael or Lucifer working side by side with him."

Castiel opens his mouth a few times. It's...logical, it makes sense, and yet -

"Human prejudice, huh?" Gabriel says. "Yeah, I know what you're thinking. Population'd go a little nuts if they heard that. But there's the thing - how are they going to command us effectively if they don't know the best ways to use us?"

"I had no idea..." Castiel says.

"And now you do." Gabriel does a lazy roll in the air, a casual show of confidence before he pauses in front of Castiel, forcing him to stop. "When are we going to get the usual 'are you sure you're an archangel? you don't act like one' question?"

"I wasn't going to ask that," Castiel says. "I didn't know what to expect, and didn't want to make assumptions."

"You were a bundle of nerves when I showed up, kid."

Castiel stops another flare of irritation before it can show. "You're dangerous," he says instead.

"And so are you."

"I'm nowhere near your - "

"Ah, ah, stop that. We've got different purposes here, and different builds. You're dangerous in your way and I am in mine, and there's no reason to go debating that."

Castiel blinks at him, and Gabriel returns to the path, flying with purpose again.

"Should I expect the other archangels to behave as you do, if I meet them?" Castiel finally asks, catching up with Gabriel.

"Nah. I'm one of a kind, kiddo."

Castiel changes his mind about professionalism and thinking that Gabriel would have it. He almost remarks on this, finding it far too comfortable to speak with Gabriel, but Gabriel holds up a hand and continues flying, even if he does slow.

"Eleven o' clock, Castiel. Down there, in the river. I think they think that they're

being cute and all hidden-like. Demons."

Castiel looks, and yes, there they are. Demons, and immature ones at that. "Cannon fodder," he says.

"That's about the size of it, which makes me suspicious. Keep an eye out while I take them out, okay?"

Gabriel waits just long enough for Castiel's nod, and then he is diving down, faster than Castiel cares to think about, and there is a large spray of water as Gabriel skewers the demon laid out on the bottom, and Castiel barely has a moment before Gabriel has taken another out - there are four of the weaklings total - and then Castiel sees the trap spring. It is a legion of demons, shaped into mockeries of ravens, crows and other winged creatures, and they are rising from the trees to swarm towards Gabriel.

Castiel almost shouts warning, but instead triggers the short-range radio inside of him and whispers warning to Gabriel.

Instead of orders, Castiel gets commentary back in return: *Whenever I meet Naberius in person I am going to ask him what the hell he was thinking. Castiel, can you believe this insult?*

Castiel doesn't even know what to say, instead flying higher and retrieving his gun from its holster, and takes aim, firing precise shots as quickly as possible so he can remove as many of these pests as possible.

The day numbers *works on me, I will laugh myself to death,* Gabriel complains from below. *Castiel, you can stop that now, just get higher up so I don't accidentally hit you. And while we're at it, can we get these things to stop pooping on me? This is going to be a bitch to clean!*

Castiel doesn't know what to say to any of that, but he heard an order, and so he ascends, getting higher. He thinks he knows what's going to happen, but - oh -

There is *light*, and *fire*, and the sky is scorched clean of the demonic taint.

Castiel is silent, awed. To think that Gabriel could do something like *that* as if he were barely breaking a sweat, to do it so casually -

It takes a while before he begins to descend.

And below, where there were once demons, there is now a forest ablaze and Gabriel already working to put it out.

Castiel, report in while I take care of this.

Castiel automatically begins the process of reporting in while he watches Gabriel - who traded the gore of demons for the soot from fire - work on snuffing out the fire. He flits from tree to tree, and Castiel can't quite see what he does before the

fire is out, but he repeats it over and over, until there is no fire.

Then Gabriel is flying into the river before ascending up to Castiel. Castiel has to look away from the too-bright white that is a freshly-clean Gabriel, but he hears Gabriel's amused laughter as he arrives.

"And that's that. I doubt we'll have any more surprises like that, but I can take 'em if they do show up." Gabriel says.

"You put out the fire," Castiel says, and thinks that it's not the right thing to say. Too obvious, too much of a question.

"We win the war, wipe demons from existance, and then that forest is a home again," Gabriel says with a shrug. "No reason to wipe it out when I can put out the fire before it gets out of control."

"I see," Castiel says. Again, it's logical, sensible. But it makes him wonder. "Do the other archangels do that?"

"Why do you think I'm usually the one taking all of the patrols in this region?" Gabriel asks, then shakes his head. "Nevermind, you wouldn't know that. But keep that in mind."

Castiel nods, now quiet, and follows when Gabriel leads on. He doesn't get Gabriel, but then again that is a lot of what he expected out of archangels in general: dangerous, and unknowable.

He didn't expect Gabriel to be so friendly, however, and it's when he's musing over that thought that Gabriel abruptly turns and asks the question that Castiel's been dreading.

"Now that the problem of the day has been solved," Gabriel says, eyes glinting - Castiel can tell he knows what he's asking - "I can get down to business. Tell me all about yourself, Mr. Experimental Unit, and more importantly, tell me why you aren't already out there, doing the job you were created to do."

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 2/?

- Jul. 2nd, 2011 at 6:44 AM

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 2/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Minor violence/descriptions of injuries.

Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean.
Word Count: 2,236 words, with 4,769 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

Emotions he never wanted crowding his mind, interfering with observation. Fear, rage, pain -

Castiel feels phantom pains litter his body whenever he tries this. He smells blood, sulfur and worse, and thinks he can taste copper.

Every single time he tries to follow the memory deeper, get information from it, he can't help it when he jerks back to reality and finds that he is expecting his hands to tremble, even when they can't.

Castiel is afraid of Jimmy Novak's memories, and how can he ever tell his superiors that fear is why he hasn't been able to complete his orders? He can't, that's the plain and simple truth of it.

The trouble now is that he has to weigh one fear against the other: is he more afraid of the memories he needs to excavate for information, or is he more afraid of this archangel in front of him, who could destroy him with only a casual use of power.

The fear, then, explains why he acts the way he does when Gabriel asks the question. It explains why he runs.

But nothing he can think of could explain why, when Gabriel trapped him and prevented him from running, he turned and attacked the archangel.

Sam can tell when trouble's up. Even without the dead giveaways - emergency call for him when he's off-shift, something about one of the patrols he knows one of the archangels was covering - he can tell. Rumors spread like wildfire. He doesn't get a chance to listen to them, but it makes him think he's prepared for it when he arrives on the roof.

The roof, however, is another story altogether. There's a mess of bloodied and torn clothes creating a trail to the stretcher the other technicians have pulled out, and what's on that stretcher - Sam has to wince. Last time he saw injuries this bad, Azazel had been loose and working on terror tactics instead of out-and-out death - he'd capture the angel, torture and dismantle it, and leave it to limp

home on its own. Sam had been relieved when that had been stopped, and not just for the usual reason of fewer emergency calls in the dead of night.

"What the hell happened here?" Sam hears, and when he looks it's Dean, still in civilian wear. One of the communications crew comes over to brief him, and Sam hurries over to hear it.

"I can't explain it," the crewman says, "As far as we can tell without pulling the entire log and getting Gabriel's report, Castiel here *attacked* Gabriel."

"Attacked." Dean says, then eyes the stretcher. "Is Gabriel in yet?"

"Yes, but he's not talking to anyone - "

"I'll get that report out of him." Dean turns, and pauses. "Sam. I didn't know they'd call you in - "

"We can talk later," Sam says. He knows, he knows. Dean thinks Sam's back at home preparing to have a pleasant day off, and he's going to be annoyed to find out that Sam decided to stay on call.

"Workaholic," Dean tells him, and gets going, leaving Sam to his business.

It's true, and they both know it. But Sam keeps coming to work and Dean isn't yet pulling strings to get a vacation enforced for him.

But that's all besides the point, and Sam needs all of his concentration for this. Castiel's lucky that its legs aren't flesh, those'll be easy to reattach - or replace, if it comes down to that - and Sam is already making an inventory of what parts he'll need brought up, as well as the medical supplies needed to keep the biological parts healthy.

Sam bends to brush back Castiel's hair, and tries to guess at how many cracks will be decorating the case protecting Castiel's brain.

He freezes at the sound of a soft sigh, and the sight of Castiel's eyelids twitching.

"Hey," Sam says, and it comes out softer than he meant it to, as if he were saying it to the angel in front of him. He clears his throat. "HEY!"

Someone's screwed up big time here. Castiel's supposed to be off, functions completely shut down.

There's the sound of creaking metal. Too-strong fingers close around his wrist, and Castiel is looking at him.

Castiel's getting too much interference in his thought processes, and there are too many readouts layered over his vision, and the pain -

Pain is unusual in angels. Very few models have been created with actual pain sensors, even if all of them have been created with alerts built in to inform them when something has been damaged.

Castiel feels pain. Sometimes he gets it in double-layers, as his biological parts, inherited from Jimmy, still have nerves that will scream if they are triggered, and Castiel isn't always in a state to turn off their signals.

This is one of those times, and he has to fight to stay focused, to identify that the shape in front of him is not a threat, and that he doesn't need to activate weapon systems. If they would even work, as he is still having trouble sorting through the complete report of how badly damaged he is.

He reels for a second as memories flash in, incomplete snapshots of Gabriel attacking him - of his own ineffectual lashing out moments before -

The figure in front of him is saying something, and Castiel realizes that his ears aren't working. No audio. Just the visual cue of a mouth moving.

He thinks he might need to finally figure out the extent of the damage. The pain makes it hard to focus, but he can't falter, not without a location.

He lets his eyes close, and focuses on the readouts instead, beginning the long process of self-repair.

Gabriel knows the questioning is going to start soon. He can't say he wants to go into details, but...well. It's been a long time since he's held a firm opinion about one of the models of angels, and as an experimental unit...

When Dean joins him by the windows, Gabriel's ready.

"Advance warning for your superiors," he says to him. "Unless some major modifications are done, they're not going to be happy with the results from the experimental unit, and I bet any more made like him are going to have the same problems."

Gabriel doesn't look at Dean, and waits for the inevitable questions. He likes Dean, because as much of a hassle as he is, he's probably the best handler that Gabriel's had to deal with since his creation.

"What the hell happened up there?" Dean says, eloquent as ever.

"Do you want the minutes, or just the important stuff?"

"Quit stalling, Gabriel. How the hell did a normal patrol go from 'one batch of demons disposed' to 'brought back Castiel in pieces'?"

"Conversation and some seriously screwed up programming." Gabriel debates holding off the details to see how mad he can make Dean get, but honestly? This is serious. He likes it when experimental units work out, and he likes it when he doesn't have to tell the scientists that their latest model is all-systems go.

"Go on," Dean prompts.

"We wrapped up the demons, and after I got the gore off of me I turned to him and asked him exactly why he wasn't following orders. Yes, I am aware that they're being lenient with him. Yes, I know emotions are sketchy to work with in the first place. No, I don't think he can get away with putting off the assignment for this long." Gabriel turns back to the window, resting his hands on the railing. "I asked the question. He froze up, and I repeated it. Then he took off running as fast as he could go."

"Running." Dean repeats.

"He was terrified. I took off after him, and pinned him to the ground. Or tried to, anyways."

Gabriel doesn't need to look at Dean to know that he's following. That if he stalled for too long, Dean would prompt him again.

"He shot me." Gabriel says flatly. "Made me pause for long enough for him to take off again. The rest of it...well, you saw what I brought back. And no, I didn't destroy the fleshy bits. None of the essentials, anyways."

There's a moment of silence, then when Gabriel looks, Dean has his arms crossed.

"That's a lot of fluff you're spouting at me. When are you going to tell me something I don't already know?"

"You didn't know what set him off," Gabriel points out. It's futile, he knows it, but this is why Dean has lasted the longest working with him.

"If I had time to check the log before I came after you, I'd have found it out. Quit evading the subject, and tell me what happened up there. He attacked you, fine. Why isn't he coming back disabled and restrained? Why are we going to have to get the roof *mopped*, Gabriel?"

"Now you're taking too long to get to the point."

"Why the overkill, Gabriel?" Dean asks, voice hard.

"He's going to be useless, and everyone in command is going to figure that out as soon as the scientists stop having their celebration that he opened his eyes in the first place."

"We've had failed models before."

"Not like this."

"What makes him different?"

Gabriel twitches a wing, then faces Dean. He's annoyed, and willing to show it to make his point.

"There's an innocent human trapped in there, a badly tortured and brutalized one. Don't protest that he was dead or brain-dead when he got here. Castiel's an interface laid over that human, and we're torturing him further by using him as a resource."

Gabriel's had this argument building for days. He *knows* it's odd coming from him, and he *knows* that as far as his freedom to influence events is, it's not far enough to halt experiments like this. He's overstepped his boundaries already, and he's willing to face whatever reprimand Dean will decide to lay on him.

Yet the problem remains: he is *bothered* by Castiel's existence, and bothered in a way that a lot of his brethren aren't going to get. Yet he might be able to make some of the humans see it his way.

"You tore him to pieces because you have moral objections over his existence," Dean says.

"That's about the size of it," Gabriel says, and turns away again.

There's a moment of silence before Dean sighs. "I would start pointing out ways where that just doesn't work, but you're going to have an argument for every one of them, aren't you."

Gabriel doesn't bother answering.

Castiel next opens his eyes in a different place. He is lying flat on a table, and he has figured out the extent of the damage. The worst of it are the internal injuries to his brain-case and lungs. The most obvious injuries are his missing legs and where his wings were torn from his back. He is fortunate to retain most of his torso, his arms and hands, and his head.

In short, the damage is excessive but he can recover from it.

This raises the question of why Gabriel didn't finish him off, as well as why he went about injuring Castiel in this manner. Castiel thinks he could attribute the brutality to Gabriel's nature, but...

He stops himself from that line of thought. There are more important issues to pursue, and it is folly to figure out an archangel's reasoning for its actions. Right now he needs to identify his location and what his possible actions could be.

There's movement, and Castiel is relieved to confirm that his neck and head are still operative enough to move. He focuses on the person next to the table, and retrieves his ID after a moment.

There still isn't audio, but he must try to communicate. Castiel checks to see if he can still speak, and decides that he must try, even if it is damaged.

Sam's ordered the assistants out to get him a list of supplies for the time being and is in the process of figuring out where to start when the angel on the table opens its eyes again. Which is wrong, because Sam made sure that it was off before he brought it down here after the first scare. Castiel should not be able to reactivate.

Sam freezes briefly and steps back, ready to call for security at the first sign of trouble. Instead of trouble, he gets Castiel's eyes focusing on him - he has always felt that Castiel's eyes were too human, but that's a personal opinion and nothing he can alter - and a moment later he gets confirmation that Castiel's aware in there.

Castiel's voice is creaky, stuttering with obvious errors, and at points it sounds like the most primitive of computerized voices, but he is understandable.

"Sam Winches-s-ter."

Sam nods, after a moment. If Castiel has identified him as someone who's not a threat, then maybe he can talk to him and find out how he reactivated himself.

"Castiel," Sam says, and figures it's worth a shot to say it. "Report."

There is a very long pause, and Sam wonders is he's going to get a response at all, before Castiel begins to speak.

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 3/?

- Jul. 5th, 2011 at 6:08 AM

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 3/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Minor violence/descriptions of injuries.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean, Rapahel.

Word Count: 2,620 words, with 7,394 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
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"Functions crit-t-tical, emergency repairs required. Biologic-cal components require priority medical attention. Lungs, brain-case; badly damaged. Request focus on restoration of audio functions after crit-t-tical situation has passed. Inquiry: is this Facility Alpha? Inquiry: Location and status of - of Gabriel?"

Sam's amazed that it's more or less comprehensible, and that Castiel is aware enough to ask questions. Also, he hadn't been aware that Castiel was currently deaf, as there were plenty of more urgent repairs to be made. He'd have to consider taking its requests seriously, but he has his own questions right now.

Still, he takes the moment to answer its questions: "Yes, this is Facility Alpha, and Gabriel's fine. He brought you back." Sam almost pauses to let it reply, but decides not to, instead forging onwards. "You were deactivated."

This is where he waits, and the silence stretches out. Sam's fingers twitch, as he's anxious to get back to work and repair the damage, but his assistants are taking too long and he will not risk getting in close until there is someone else in the room.

It's almost a relief when Castiel does speak again.

"I find-d no record of a time-lapse in functions beyond the emergency shut-t-t down due to damage. F-Full funct-tions restored at approach of unident-t-t- " Castiel's voice is getting worse, but it doesn't stop. Sam wonders if it even notices. " - gure. Part-t-tial shut-shut down due to damage assess - assess - "

There's an unpleasant grinding sound, and Castiel is completely silent. Sam's mind is already racing, trying to find the reason for this. He'd been assured - twice! - that Castiel was completely deactivated and unable to reactivate. It had been why he'd sent out all of his assistants in the first place!

So why - Sam startled as the door opened, and one of his assistants came in, bringing both parts and apologies for the delay.

"It reactivated on its own," Sam says. "I'm getting to work, so stay close to the phone."

There's some good in this, he figures. He knows exactly where to start, and that's with the brain-case. He can repair the damage and look for the reason for the

faulty deactivation at the same time.

In an envelope sitting on Sam Winchester's desk in his private residence:

Sam - Enclosed is the excerpt you requested from Rosen's articles. Are you ever going to tell me what you're doing looking up the archs specifically, or should I just get back to work on transcribing the rest of it? - Bobby

'First Appearance of the Angels'

To this day, no one can explain why Chuck Shurley began work on the angels when he did, or how he knew when the demons would first attack. It's only one of the mysteries surrounding this genius, but it could be called the most important one, for no one alive today can forget that day. There is no need to recount the details of the entire day in this paper save for one event.

The physical manifestation of Asmodeus in Detroit and the subsequent appearance of the four archangels minutes later. Humanity had not been prepared for such an attack, certainly not from such a frankly supernatural source. This writer was expecting a nuclear war to herald the beginning of the Apocalypse, not a beast that would rise from the earth itself.

[...]

Chuck Shurley has since confirmed that he completed construction and programming on the last of the archangels barely hours before Asmodeus appeared.

Sam rarely sleeps at work in the first place, but he couldn't help it today. Clean up after the long ordeal that was Castiel's surgery led to a concerned coworker making him sit on the couch in one of the spare break rooms, and the next he knew, the room was dark and he was covered with a blanket.

He's yawning when he sits up, and he reaches over to the end-table to grab his glasses. That's when he spots the flash of white across the room.

Instinctively, he freezes. He *knows* that color, there's nothing that clean in there and the walls are a pale blue, not white -

Two spots of gold flicker in the darkness of the room, and Sam feels his stomach flip over.

"Gabriel," he whispers, picking up his glasses and putting them on - he's not blind without them, but the world has that much more clarity with them on - and he slowly gets up, willing his legs not to turn to jelly.

Gabriel doesn't move, but Sam knows that it's watching him, and incredibly aware of every motion he's making, dark room or not.

It's incredibly unnerving, and Sam's frozen for a moment, trying to decide if he should turn on the lamp on the end table, or just try to get out of here.

"Sam Winchester," Gabriel says, and his voice is so amused that Sam can't stop the next flash of fear. "You know, for someone who works on the most intimate parts of so many of us, it's kind of funny that you're afraid of me."

The twin points of gold are abruptly closer, and then Gabriel is turning on the lamp. Sam marvels again at Gabriel's design, mostly to distract himself from the spike of fear that the sudden movement inspired.

For all of how it is obviously one of the first designed, Sam still can't shake the feeling that Gabriel is one of the most advanced angels in existence, alongside its sibling archangels. For all of the utility of the angels created after them, few of them hold a candle to the originals. Sam can't shake a brief thought of Castiel and how human it usually sounds and looks, but -

"Oh, you get boring real fast."

Sam jerks his head up and is pinned by Gabriel's gaze again.

"I'd also appreciate a little change in pronouns. I'm a he, not an it. Well, currently. You never know when I'd make for a better woman." Gabriel's grinning again, but there's still danger lying there. Sam doesn't move. Gabriel goes on. "Some of us have chosen genders, if only to make it easier on you guys."

Sam's mouth is working before fear can stop it.

"You're machines, you don't have - "

"Not entirely machines. And those of us with names have the spark of life, though the amount of independent thought varies according to rank. And if you're thinking of dangly bits, the only reason I don't have any right now is because we're down here to make war, not love."

"Down here?" Sam asks, and even if he's still afraid, curiosity has taken over and Gabriel knows more than he's saying. Sam can't help but think of the only other archangel he's had contact with - Michael - and Gabriel is nothing like him when he talks.

Gabriel waves a hand. "Earth. And *duh*, I'm not Michael. He's got a stick so far up - "

Sam stands up abruptly, the thought of Michael triggering another stream of thoughts that leads to one question: what time is it, and what has he missed?

" - oh. Honestly. Nine fifteen forty three AM. The day after you got your mitts on

Castiel. You've been asleep for about seven hours and unfortunately, yes Castiel is fine. Happy now?"

"You're the best clock I've ever found," Sam says, and beelines for the door, forgetting his fear in his urgency. Bobby said he'd deliver those papers today and Sam had wanted to ask him some things in person, and if he runs he might make it in time to catch him, and -

Gabriel has a hold on his arm. "We aren't finished."

"Let go," Sam says firmly. If it were any other angel, they'd let go. Gabriel only tightens his grip.

"If you want to look up information on me, you don't have to go through a third party when you can talk to the source directly."

"But Chuck - "

"Source. Directly."

"You're a creation."

"So are you."

Sam meets Gabriel's eyes on his own this time and glares. "Let go."

Gabriel's lips curl into another smirk. "Don't expect me to let you go for long, Sam." He lets go, and Sam rushes out, sure Gabriel was watching him run.

He's unnerved, in a hurry, and he also can't shake the changed pronoun from his thoughts. That's when Sam decides he needs to speak with Dean at the earliest opportunity.

Castiel is still confined to the room he was repaired in, for security reasons. He isn't bound to the table, and he's grateful for that, but he still lies on it, as it is the most convenient place to rest. He feels the urge to stand, and if possible to pace, but he stifles it. He closes his eyes instead of staring at the ceiling and marvels at the lack of pain instead.

It's the emotions that are giving him problems. Castiel is well aware of this. He's been lucky so far that he hasn't seen enough combat for the fear to take hold there, and that worry in and of itself is making him afraid.

Castiel raises a hand and studies it, studying it. It's artificial skin, but it is remarkably realistic. He closes his hand into a fist and it still looks real.

He is forced to lower it before the emotions overpower him again. He cannot explain why, but having skin only makes it harder to control himself.

It occurs to him that he should report that, and soon.

The door opens with a swish, and Castiel opens his eyes once more, looking. He freezes.

It's Raphael. Appearance virtually the same as Gabriel's, with different facial features and eyes that are, while still golden, somehow darker.

Castiel's mind automatically provides him with Raphael's formal identification: WCA #00D "Raphael". He has never met Raphael directly before. He can only guess at why he is here.

"Hold still," Raphael instructs, and Castiel instantly does. "I've been sent to confirm your status."

Castiel wonders if he should report, but instead nods, watching Raphael check him over, sometimes with touch and sometimes with visual contact.

It occurs to him that Raphael is the medic of the archangels. That he has occasionally performed emergency repairs for lesser angels he was on assignment with. It humbles Castiel to know that he is getting treatment from this archangel.

"As it should," Raphael murmurs, and Castiel frowns. Raphael glances at him, meeting his eyes. "You have the correct attitude, Castiel."

Unbidden, the question rises in Castiel's mind: how did Raphael know to say that? Can he...?

"Yes," Raphael says, and meets Castiel's eyes again. "If the question is 'can they do it?', the answer is always yes. The correct question to ask is: 'what are the qualifiers needed before we can use it?'"

Castiel nods, mutely. What does he say to that? He watches as Raphael sends warmth through his shoulders and knows without asking that he is in perfect condition.

"Close your eyes."

Castiel complies without a thought, and feels two fingers on his forehead before -

- he comes to, blinking as Raphael pulls his fingers back.

"You are correct, you should report your problems with emotional control soon."

Castiel nods, feeling oddly calm. It doesn't take much thought for him to realize that Raphael must have hand in that, and he looks at the archangel with renewed awe.

"It is a stop-gap, Castiel. You need to learn control before Gabriel's objections sway the rest of us."

The rest of - oh. Castiel swallows, and nods. He has countless questions: why are the archangels so *interested* in him? Why would Gabriel do that to him? Why is Raphael helping him now?

"You will get answers in due time," Raphael says. "Expect me to visit again."

And then he's gone.

"Gabriel, get your feathery ass in here *now*. We need to talk."

Gabriel lifts his gaze from his arms to Dean and rolls his eyes. "Shall I shine your shoes while we're at it, *sir*?"

Dean only glares at him until Gabriel reluctantly comes away from the wall and follows Dean into his office. He doesn't bother to sit, and Dean doesn't either, standing by the window with his arm crossed.

"What the hell are you up to?"

"If this is about Castiel, I told you already."

"Sam has informed me that you've terrorized him twice in one week."

"Terrorized…?" Gabriel cracks up. "He intruded on me the first time and we had a perfectly reasonable conversation. The other one, well, I didn't want to wake him up so I waited until he got up on his own."

"You do know that standing and watching someone sleep is massively creepy."

"Impressing the fear of God into puny hoo-mans is my job."

"Your *job* is to destroy demons and not cause trouble otherwise." Dean scowls. "And you've already caused enough trouble this week."

"It's been slow, what can I say? Sam's just *fun* to talk to, especially when he gets all excited about the teeny tiniest bits of information I let slip."

"Information."

"Yeah, like the reason why I don't have a penis right now."

Gabriel's impressed: he's never seen Dean go from 'tell me right now or I will force it out of you' to 'oh dear god shut up shut up' so fast before.

"You're doing this on purpose," Dean says at last, voice tight.

"There's a reason for everything, and a purpose for every action, even if we don't know what it is."

"Are you honestly *trying* to make me quit today?"

"Maybe?" Gabriel admits. "I like you, I admit that, but you're getting too good at this."

"Having someone around to keep you in line isn't a bad thing, Gabriel."

"That's what my brothers are for."

"They're not getting paid to do it."

Gabriel moves abruptly into Dean's space, staring him down, and to Dean's credit, he doesn't flinch, instead staring right back.

"I don't think you like it when someone has your number and won't put up with your bullshit."

Gabriel makes a show of rolling up imaginary sleeves.

"You seriously think threatening me is going to get me to quit?"

And Gabriel knew it wouldn't work, Dean's too stubborn for that. He grins instead and drops his arms, stepping back. "I like you, Dean. I'll let you stay on for a while longer, so keep up with the good work."

"How about you drop the attitude and tell me what you're up to with Sam."

"I'm not going to hurt him, and the rest is none of your business."

"If I hear another complaint from Sam, expect to be flying solo night shifts for a week."

Gabriel rolls his eyes, but okay, it is an effective threat. The problem with Dean's position is that he can go over Gabriel's head and get support against Gabriel. Gabriel wouldn't care about that, except - well, Michael takes an active interest whenever he gets reports that Gabriel's not being cooperative, and Michael has the worst attitude Gabriel knows.

He's far too serious for his own good, is all, and the problem is that Dean knows that Michael will get involved if there is a problem.

Which means that Gabriel's going to have to try and not 'terrorize' Sam next time he meets with him.

Of course, there's nothing that says -

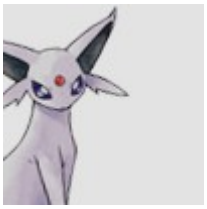
"If you threaten him not to tattle on you, I'll make a month." Dean says. "Got that?"

Gabriel narrows his eyes. Dean knows him far, far too well. It might be time for a change, before Dean interferes with something really important.

"Got it."

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 4/?

- Jul. 10th, 2011 at 9:36 AM



Title: Cyborg Gabriel 4/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Minor violence/descriptions of injuries. (No warnings for this chapter, though.)
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean, Rapahel.
Word Count: 2,198 words, with 9,590 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

I extend many thanks to **synnerxx**, **stharridan**, **_bluebells**,

and **theinsaneeraser** for wordwars! You guys are the reason I'm not failing miserably at posting more of this. :3

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

"You're asking all the wrong questions, Sam."

"What?" Sam says, looking up from his desk. He can't stop the next yelp, because he is at his personal home, and why is there *Gabriel* standing in the doorway. "What - what are you doing here?"

"Raphael paid Castiel a visit last night, Dean chewed me out because you complained to him, yadda yadda." Gabriel waves a hand, and comes in. "We need to talk."

Sam opens his mouth to say something but doesn't get any words out. Because Gabriel isn't in his usual uniform out here, and the white he saw in the doorway was the white t-shirt he's wearing. The rest of the outfit is purely civilian: green jacket, blue jeans, stuff Sam could find in Dean's closet.

Sam's first thought is that it looks *wrong* on Gabriel's immaculately carved features. He'd gotten used to the uniforms, impractical and antiquated as they appeared, but they fit with the appearance of the angels in the first place.

"You're - " Sam says, and he can't help it. "You look like you're trying to imitate Castiel."

Gabriel's features twist, and he plucks at the jacket. "What, I can't dress casual?"

"Not with that hair." And this has officially become the weirdest conversation Sam's had in a long time.

"I'll have you know I designed this hair specifically to fit me." Gabriel runs a hand over it - there's the other thing about the angels that Sam has never gotten. Especially for the archangels. Only certain parts of their insides are biological, the rest of their bodies are metal - well, except for portions that are plastic and a host of technological wonders that allow their faces to be expressive, but thing is, Gabriel's hair wasn't made like that. None of the angels have organic hair (Castiel being the exception) and it's carved metal. White, gleaming, like the rest of Gabriel.

"You designed it?" Sam asks, and Gabriel rolls his eyes.

"Of course I did. I've had it before, I like how it looks, a tribute to the old vessel - " Gabriel is abruptly silent. He meets Sam's eyes. "As I was saying. You're asking all the wrong questions."

"Then what should I be asking?" Sam asks, reminding himself to be suspicious. He needs to be wary of Gabriel, and he can't let himself be drawn in by the odd details Gabriel keeps dropping.

Gabriel thunks the heel of his hand to his forehead and sighs. "How obvious do I need to *be* with you? The odd details! Stop ignoring them!"

"What?" Sam asks. "You honestly want me to keep asking about your hair?"

"Sam, you're smarter than that. I'm relying on that."

"Then…'tribute to the old vessel'?" Sam says, frowning. He hadn't understood it, and that was something he learned right-quick when working with the angels in general. If he didn't understand it, he wasn't supposed to ask about it, as then he'd find himself stumbling into top secret information really quickly, and he wanted *some* freedom in what he could say and write in his private hours.

"Sam Winchester. You're finally getting it. I'm asking you to resurrect the curiosity

they beat out of you, and I'm asking you to apply it to me and everything I'm saying."

"Why?"

"Figure it out for yourself." Gabriel says, and plops down on the desk, legs uncomfortably close to Sam's arm. Sam scoots his chair back.

"Fine. I'll play your game." Sam says, crossing his arms. "What did you mean by vessel?"

"I'm wearing one right now. It's the body, meatsuit, metalsuit...you know, that thing."

"Why not just call it a body?"

"Why not call a hotel room a home? I leave this vessel, I still have a home to go back to."

"Back to...?"

"And aha! We are beginning to approach the correct line of questions, Sam. I'd say that I'm proud of you, but I have to drag you into this, so no. I'm not proud."

"You want me to ask these questions, Gabriel, so why not answer them?" Sam asks, and decides that this is getting frustrating again.

"I can't do that."

"Can't?" Sam asks. "Why on earth can't you answer these questions?"

"On earth...you've answered yourself, Sam. The reasons I can't answer are on earth right now, and I'm actually missing a meeting with one right now. Which will annoy him royally, but hey, it'll make the point I wanted to make to him, and as a bonus I don't have to be there in person to make it!"

"Missing a meeting with one right now." Sam says, thinking now. He'd heard the phrase 'making a point' just the other day, too, when he questioned Dean about why Castiel was damaged like that, and in connection with Gabriel... "Are you missing a meeting with Dean right now?" He asks, straightening, absolutely ready to scold Gabriel if he needed to..

Gabriel didn't miss a beat before he broke out in laughter, but then just as abruptly the laughter faded, even if the amusement remained in Gabriel's tone of voice.

"Dean? Ha, no. He's too much fun to miss meeting with, and he's going to be too quick to jump the gun on restricting my movements after Castiel, so I have to be a good little archangel for the time being. No, no, missing an appointment with humans is bad news, even for me. Even if Michael was the one who laid down

that law in the first place..." Gabriel shrugs, and twirls his finger. "Crank that brain box harder, Sammy, and tell me who I'm not seeing right now, and tell me about the reasons why I can't be straight with you."

"You can't tell me straight, but you can lead me by the nose to the conclusions you want me to come to." Sam rubs his forehead. "There's a reason you can't tell me straight, and it's actually a someone."

"Go on, o wise one."

"This someone is an angel. An angel you'd respect and follow, and an angel capable of giving orders. Therefore it's one of the other archangels."

"Ah, but good things come in threes."

"All of the other archangels. They don't want you talking to me."

"I can talk to you all I want, Sam. It's the content."

"What are you hiding? What are *they* hiding?"

Gabriel is abruptly off the desk, standing. He looks around as Sam watches, then touches his forehead. "I'll give you a gift," He says, and whispers words that Sam doesn't recognize, except for one. "...Amen."

Sam's eyes twitch, and he feels disoriented for a moment, as if something - Gabriel's *glowing*, Archangels don't glow unless they're about to release one of their weapons, he should run except there's no running from - Sam blinks and Gabriel's not glowing, just an ordinary guy in ordinary clothes except that his skin is metal and his hair isn't hair.

"What did you do?" Sam asks, and is so weirdly proud that his voice doesn't shake after that. He's rattled, and he wouldn't be surprised if Gabriel did that just to keep him off balance.

"I can't read your mind anymore, Sam. Neither can my brothers. When they notice, go ahead and tell them I did it for you. But don't tell them why."

Sam almost, almost asks him why he did that for him. But there's the thing, he already knows. Gabriel wants him to learn things that he shouldn't by following the hints Gabriel's given him, and Gabriel wants him to do it without letting the other archangels find out.

Gabriel's covering his own ass, basically. It's not a gift.

"Take it off," Sam says.

"Rejecting my gift?"

"I won't protect you."

Gabriel's eyes narrow into golden slits. "Going to play like that, then?"

Sam stares back, resolute. As fascinating as the information is, it's not worth subterfuge against the three most powerful beings on the planet. (Not counting certain demons, but Sam doesn't know for sure and he's not willing to follow up that line of thought. Not now, at any rate.)

"Unfortunately for you, Sam, I am beginning to take you seriously. So let me make this clear." Gabriel sounds reasonable. Calm. Menacing. He raises a finger. "I spend several hours a week in a locked room alone with Dean Winchester. I just took about ten seconds to put a block over your mind so archangels can't read it. I know you have an active imagination, so fill in the blanks and decide if you want to work with me or not. Your choice."

Gabriel blows on his finger and puts his hands in his pockets.

Sam thinks he might hate him a little. Or a lot. But Gabriel can't read his mind, so he lets himself decide that he hates Gabriel a lot.

"Your secrets are safe with me," Sam says, instead of voicing his thoughts. "Do anything to Dean and they won't be."

"Of course, of course." Gabriel waves a hand. "Nice talking to you, Sam. I'll see you tomorrow, same time same station?"

"Gabriel. I'll be at the Facility tomorrow."

"The next time you're alone and with a spare fifteen minutes, expect me to talk to you. And if that doesn't happen all day, I have no issues with watching you sleep, remember."

Gabriel gives him his most innocent grin and walks out.

Sam reminds himself again that his thoughts are inviolate - Gabriel wouldn't lie about that - and decides that Gabriel is a bastard. An absolute bastard.

Sam can't help but think one more thing, before he turns his mind from Gabriel: he's also an absolutely fascinating bastard, and despite himself he wants to know more.

Castiel isn't let out of the room nor released to be returned to his duties until Dean Winchester visits him. Dean has a measure of authority here, but that's not what Castiel knows him for. No, Dean is Gabriel's handler. So to speak.

Castiel is sitting up on the table when Dean walks in. He is studying the trench coat hung on the wall and wondering for the first time why he has been allowed to keep it, and wear it.

He straightens and looks to Dean when he realizes that Dean is there.

Dean crosses his arms and studies him. Castiel wonders what he sees.

"Gabriel told me why he did it," Dean says, after a moment.

Castiel lifts his chin. He wants to know. He wants Dean to tell him. He's half expecting his emotions to rear up and make him afraid of Gabriel, and make him afraid of what Dean will say, but Raphael's stop-gap is still in effect. Castiel is calm. Distantly he wonders if he is too calm, and distantly he wonders if it was better being afraid. But he remembers that under the skin he is wearing, there is metal holding him together.

"Castiel."

"Yes?" Castiel asks.

"He did it to make a point. He objects to your existence. I can't say I understand or agree with him, but that's what motivated him."

"Oh," Castiel says, and, "Why didn't he finish the job?"

"He was making a point," Dean repeats. "He does stupid things, but he's not stupid enough to destroy you without authorization either, and he doesn't have that. He won't get it, if I can help it."

Castiel blinks at that, surprise leaking through the calm. "You don't agree with his point?"

Dean drops his arms, and Castiel reads surprise in his gestures. "Of course not!"

Castiel tells himself not to, but the surprise he feels impels him onwards. "Why?"

"They wouldn't make you without a reason," Dean starts, then shakes his head. That's not the reason, Castiel can tell. Dean starts again. "Gabriel can't get away with destroying you just because you're like him," Dean says finally. "You remind me a lot of the archangels in general."

Castiel stills.

Dean comes closer. "That expression you've got right now. I don't know if it's fake or not, but you look like you're feeling something. Like the archangels do."

Castiel swallows, and nods. He is feeling something. He's been encouraged not to be obvious when speaking with most humans, but...Dean has guessed it. He reminds himself that Dean is Gabriel's handler, so he can be trusted.

Dean gives a low whistle. "That confirms it, then. Castiel, I'm actually officially here to let you know you can return to your duties. So you'd better get going."

Castiel is automatically getting up and pulling on the coat the moment the words leave Dean's mouth. He does pause to look at Dean once more.

"I feel surprise," Castiel says softly. "More often I feel fear. I'm not very good at controlling my emotions yet, but I am going to correct that flaw."

"...right," Dean says, and Castiel gets going.

Yet: "...that's not right," Dean says quietly, and Castiel overhears it as he leaves. He closes his eyes briefly, but keeps going.

There's nothing he can do to change what Dean is thinking, and he must trust that Dean will remain professional in his actions, and not imitate his charge.

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 5/?

- Jul. 12th, 2011 at 10:58 AM

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 5/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Minor innuendos. (What? Gabriel's in this chapter!)
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean. <-- Only listing the main characters as otherwise this'll get far too long as this goes on.
Word Count: 3,464 words, with 13,035 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

I extend many thanks to **synnerxx**, **stharridan**, **_bluebells**,

and **theinsaneeraser** for wordwars! You guys are the reason I'm not failing miserably at posting more of this. :3

I've tinkered with the header a bit and will continue to do so as the fic goes on, fyi. In any case. This is my longest chapter yet! I hope you all like it. :D

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

It's the flash of white in the corner of his eye that gives him away, and makes it possible for Sam to be calm and in control when Raphael touches his wrist.

Raphael: Sam knows from the reports that he is too fond of battle, too *vicious* with his weapons and that demons fear him. Demons fear all of the archangels, but there is a special hatred/horror of Raphael, or so the reports go. Sam doesn't know how demons think, and he doesn't want to follow up that line of thought, but he can't help it. Not when it is Raphael himself holding his wrist with a gentle but immovable grip, and looking at him expectantly.

For all his faked calm, Sam's mind is racing to figure out the correct things to say; the correct things to *do* to convince Raphael to leave him to his duties. He has encountered far too many archangels in the past week and come into close contact with them far too often for him to feel safe.

Raphael hasn't let go. Sam's not sure if he should talk, or if he should wait for Raphael to begin the conversation.

"Gabriel has been taking an unusual interest in you," Raphael says at last. Sam dips his head in a nod and doesn't comment. "Do you know why, Sam Winchester?"

Sam's usual policy when it comes to people with authority is honesty. It's the safest way to go. But here and now he is thinking of the threatening glint in Gabriel's eyes and he is thinking of Dean.

"No, I don't know why," Sam says - *lies* - and he is surprised at how natural it sounds. How confident he is. He tugs at his hand. "Ask him yourself. I have work to get to."

Raphael doesn't let go. "I can tell you why he's interested in you, Sam Winchester. You are naturally curious, and I expect you will want to know. Won't you?" His look is calculating, and Sam doesn't trust it. But he's been caught, and must swallow the lie Raphael will give him.

"Tell me," Sam says.

"Dean Winchester has crossed him one too many times, and he wishes to dispose of the leash Michael put in place. You are a convenient way to limit Dean's movements."

"Because he'll be in a room alone with me for several hours a week," Sam says. "Do all of you use the same old intimidation tactic? Dean can handle himself, and I can do the same."

"Winchester," Raphael says clearly. "I would advise you to be careful of your words, and consider yourself fortunate that I am not Lucifer."

Why would you say that? is on the tip of Sam's tongue, but abruptly Raphael lets

go and steps away from him, and Sam sees the source of the interruption: an angel. There is the splash of yellow on its shoulder, and Sam knows it for what it is: messenger. Otherwise used for recon and infrequently for light combat.

It approaches Raphael, and Sam recognizes that the message is for him, but consider it a testament to how peeved Sam is that he stays and listens in. If it was truly a private message the angel would have made it clear before speaking.

"Pardon. The officer would be advised to note the present of a "diplomat" in custody. Formally request clarification on the situation."

Diplomat? Sam had to wonder, and from the look on Raphael's face - so expressive when compared to the absolute neutrality on the other angel - apparently this was surprising news.

"Sam Winchester, come with me. We may require your services," Raphael says after a moment. "Lead me to the demon," he tells the angel, and immediately begins walking, not waiting for Sam to catch up.

Sam does, however, because demon - here? What?

"A demon?" Sam asks, hoping to prompt an explanation.

"Likely a trap. They are not so foolish as to think we would leave their stain unpurged from the earth." Raphael says, walking quickly. He speaks to the angel. "Inform Gabriel of the situation once we arrive."

"Gabriel witnessed the arrival of the diplomat. Sir."

"He knew it was coming?"

"To the officer's left."

Raphael seemed to anticipate the absence of an answer and instead entered the room on the left, Sam right behind him. The messenger waited at the doorway.

Inside: a man. Black pin-striped suit, immaculate hair, every inch of the man screaming 'I am filthy rich, you little snot'. Not even the barest hint that he was anything other than human, except for the two angels hovering ominously by his shoulders, and the archangels studying him. Gabriel looked immaculately clean next to him, and amused to boot. Raphael...well, Sam hesitated to say it, but Raphael looked annoyed.

It was fortunate they couldn't read his thoughts.

"This, Raphael, is Crowley." Gabriel says. "And he has such an interesting offer that I decided to hear him out before squishing him out of existence. So I'd appreciate it if you held back on the violence for now."

Raphael, Sam decides, has remarkable self-control. He only nods and studies

Crowley. "Carry on, Gabriel."

"Of course, of course. So. Crowley, if you would mind repeating to them what you told me?"

Sam revises his opinion of Crowley when he slides his gaze over Raphael, then Sam. He feels suddenly *dirtier*, as if someone smeared oil over him.

"That's a cute blessing he's got there," Crowley says, and nods to Sam. "Someone important?"

"Him? He's just a janitor, pay him no mind," Gabriel lies, and Crowley laughs.

"You are a terrible liar," Crowley tells him.

"I'm an angel. Deal with it."

"This demon had something to say," Raphael says, eyes narrowing.

"Right, yes. I did." Crowley puts his hands together. "What would you say if I offered you all the information I have regarding my two prestigious rulers. Including certain weaknesses, character traits and oh, yes, I did happen to obtain one of Sammael's feathers. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"A trap," Raphael says immediately.

"Not so," Crowley says, and produces a single white feather from his sleeve. The sight of it makes Sam flinch, and he can't explain why. "If your little pet's reaction was any indication, I bet you can't even begin to deny that it's the real thing."

Raphael opens his mouth, but Gabriel holds up a hand. "The questions that I should ask now are these: what are you getting out of this? What's the cost for us? How do you intend to come out of this alive?"

The feather vanishes into his sleeve as Crowley raises one finger. "One, I think we're all in agreement that those two are bad news for everyone. I certainly didn't want a war this early on, and certainly not one we're likely to lose. I am not interested in dying for a pair of upstart intruders, thank you very much. Two," He raises another finger. "In exchange for the information I want asylum. Every demon on Hell and Earth is going to be after me when they find out, and all I want is to come out of this alive. Which leads me to point three. I'm not talking or handing over any feathers until you bring in Lucifer and have him swear to abide by my terms."

"What makes you think we can't simply *take* what you have got?" Raphael asks, in a low growl.

"Oh, easy trick." Crowley gives him a polite smile. "I go up in flames, the feather goes up in flames."

"Crowley, you may be a demon, but you are an *interesting* demon. Excuse us while we talk." Gabriel straightens up and heads for the door, and Sam simply follows, glad to be away from the demon. Raphael follows as well, but not before ordering the messenger angel at the door to get another set of guards for the prisoner.

They pause in the hallway.

"It was real," Raphael says, or asks, though it's not quite a question.

"Sammael's feather. No mistaking it," Gabriel confirms. "I'd like to see how Crowley got his hands on it in the first place, though."

"You assume he's telling the truth."

"I assume that he's not suicidal. Probably lying on some details here and there, but he's intelligent enough to wiggle his way out of suicidal assignments. Or bring something that means they're not suicidal assignments, and don't think I didn't search him for everything he's got. Only thing on him was a pen and a coin, and well, he doesn't have those anymore. He didn't seem too fazed about those either, so Raphael? I assume he's telling the truth. Short enough explanation for you?"

Raphael gives Gabriel a glare, and Sam begins to wonder if he should get going. All he is here is a mute witness to events that are above his clearance, and here - here he pauses, and remembers. Gabriel told him to revive his curiosity, and this is most certainly the most curious thing he's witnessed so far.

Before Raphael starts his next response, Sam dares to ask a question.

"Who is Sammael?" Sam asks, and there, that was the right thing to ask if the amusement in Gabriel's eyes is anything to go by.

"Nothing - " Raphael begins, but Gabriel interrupts.

"Fallen angel, a real nasty one. Actually gave me and Lucy a run for our money when we found him for the first time, but what can you do with circumstances being what they were?" Gabriel shrugs, still looking amused, and all Sam can think is *what the hell is going on?*

"Gabriel!" Raphael says, sounding outraged, shocked - "That is enough!"

"What do we gain from hiding this, Raphael?" Gabriel asks him. "What's the point in playing this game?"

"Wait," Sam says. "You mean to say...there's someone else out there like Chuck Shurley? Who can make - "

"Oh, please tell me you're joking. You're not actually that hopeless, are you?"

Sam blinks at Gabriel, because that was wrong? Then what else could it mean?

"Then..."

"This ends here." Raphael says. "Gabriel, come with me."

"This doesn't end here," Gabriel says. "Sam, I'll catch up with you later. And don't stop thinking about it. It's really way more obvious than that." He waves a hand, then focuses on Raphael. "I'll come with you. We should talk."

Sam watches Raphael and Gabriel leave, feeling unsettled. There was something bigger going on here, something they were hiding from apparently everyone - did Dean know about this? Did the generals? Did *Chuck* know?

"...right, Dean." Sam says, and turns around, making a beeline to his office. It was the first and easiest place to start, after all...

...Which meant that of course Dean was out. There was a 'Out for lunch, back soon' note on the door, and Sam had to suddenly wonder - since this was paranoia week, after everything Gabriel was doing - did Gabriel have a hand in why the demon arrived when it did? This was a slow week with regards to attacks, so everyone felt free to have a lunch hour off-site, if it was possible.

Which meant. Sam put a hand on the wall. It wasn't likely, there was probably someone else...Sam didn't want to try knocking on doors when all he had was a private - was it private? - concern about the angels.

A flash of gold in his mind, and Sam realized something else that he wanted: a chance to talk to Gabriel, to make him give him more hints, or - unlikely - straight answers.

Would Raphael force Gabriel to stop? Would Sam's position suffer in any way? Sam didn't know. He wasn't comfortable with the immediate knowledge that the archangels were that powerful. (In a strictly non-lethal sense, he was afraid of them in the first place because he knew what they could do with violence.)

It was something of a relief to think of the archangels and realize that Michael was stationed in Facility Beta usually, and that Lucifer was still on an extended long-range mission.

"Yo, Sam!"

Dean's back. Sam turns, and falters.

Gabriel flashes him a grin, and that's just not right. Dean's nowhere in sight, just Gabriel.

"Betcha didn't know I could fake voices, eh Sammy?" Gabriel's voice flickers and is his once more. "I ditched Raphael. We need to talk."

"I - how?"

"How did I ditch Raphael? I don't think you want to know, but just trust that I took care of it. In any case. Want to crash in Dean's office? You'll have a convenient escape from the conversation when Dean gets back."

Sam finds himself nodding, as, well, while it's no excuse, he did want to speak with Gabriel.

Gabriel just grins at him and pushes into Dean's office, the door making an unpleasant sound as the lock was torn open.

"Oops." Gabriel says, but his tone is so insincere Sam doesn't believe it for a second. "I keep forgetting Dean still locks this thing. As if it'd keep me out."

"...You didn't forget, did you?" Sam says, after a beat. "Why do you think you need to intimidate me now?"

Sam can't read the look Gabriel gives him now, but Gabriel shakes his head a moment later, waving him into the office.

There's a seat at the desk and in front of the desk, but Sam doesn't feel comfortable sitting where Dean would, and there's no way he'll sit in front of the desk, not when Gabriel will surely plonk down in Dean's seat. It's odd, but Sam's figured out that posturing is important when it comes to Gabriel, and that's why he stands next to the window instead of having a seat.

As expected, Gabriel flops in Dean's chair.

"Sam Winchester," Gabriel says, sitting up to eye him. "You're beginning to bore me again."

"What's your goal with this?" Sam asks instead of answering that. "What are you trying to do by telling me things I shouldn't know?"

"Hey, hey! I never told you anything important. Hinted at it maybe, but - "

"Letter of the law if not the spirit," Sam says. "Answer the question."

"This is exactly what I'm talking about! Boo-oring!"

"You think I'm more interested when I'm half-terrified of you and confused by almost everything you say."

Gabriel is abruptly close to him, leaning in, and Sam stops himself from shrieking. For all of his annoyance and attitude, he *is* intimidated, and when Gabriel just blatantly defies the laws of physics -

Gabriel's gaze is harsh, but it turns into something - dangerous. Predatory. Amused.

"I have Dean already," Gabriel says, completely deadpan. "He's perfect for all of my dominatrix fantasies about being the delinquent student being scolded by teacher. I don't want or need another one of him."

"...Say that again?" Dean asks from the door. "I'm perfect for *what*?"

Sam wants to put his head in his hands. Dean has the worst timing in the history of ever, and the grin spreading on Gabriel's face -

Gabriel turns around slowly and deliberately, and rocks his hips back into Sam's crotch, and just like that Sam turns bright red. Nevermind, he doesn't understand Gabriel at all. Not if he wants to bring - oh, lord, can archangels even *have* sex?

"You're perfect for this," Gabriel says, and is grinning again. "Bend me over the desk and whip me, eh?"

"Oh, god," Dean says. "What the hell are you up to now? Are there *demons* in the closet that you don't want me to know about? Did you - "

"Actually, there's just the one. And Raphael's already been outraged by it. So it's not that this time!" Gabriel sounds so proud. Sam wants to slap him. But Gabriel's pressing back up against him, and now his hair is pressed up under Sam's chin, and Sam never realized how *short* he was before.

"Demon." Dean says, then pinches his nose. "Gabriel, get off of my brother and tell me what the hell you're up to."

When Gabriel has a seat in Dean's chair, Sam doesn't know what's going on anymore. It's - he's found the textbook definition of 'madcap'. Yes. That must be it.

"Go get your ruler out, Dean, you need to slap my knuckles!" Gabriel says with a grin.

"Sam, I'm sorry," Dean tells him. "He's the worst of the entire lot."

"I gathered that already," Sam says dryly.

"I take offense to that! You haven't even *met* Michael, or Lucifer!"

"I have," Dean puts in. "And they're nowhere near as obnoxious as you are."

"Objection! Michael is just as obnoxious as I am, only he's subtle about it! And Lucifer's got his methods..."

"They don't *flirt* with my brother!"

"Obscure angel mating rituals that you don't know how to recognize means that Raphael's practically married to Sam by now."

"You are *full* of bullshit."

"Delicious creamy filling, Dean, don't be mistaken."

Sam edges towards the door. Why is Dean grinning. Dean is grinning, Dean has been grinning since the angel mating rituals line and Sam doesn't want to know why. He wants out. He wants some sanity for five minutes.

"I think I traumatized him," Gabriel says.

"Don't think I won't get your secrets out of you later," Dean tells Gabriel before turning to Sam. "Sorry about that. Really. It's the only way to deal with him when he gets like that."

"Hellooo, still here."

Dean doesn't look at him. "Was the line about a demon true?"

Sam nods. "It wants asylum, or something. Gabriel and Raphael were there. Actually, I need to talk to you later, too. Without him listening in."

"Is the demon urgent enough for me to force answers out of him right now, or can it wait for us to talk?"

Sam pauses, then looks at Gabriel. "He's here already. And the demon's still here. So...I'll catch up with you later?"

"I'll haunt your dreams tonight, Sam," Gabriel calls as Sam finally leaves the office.

The door closes behind him, and Sam puts a hand on the wall. Maybe it's really a good thing that he's avoided interacting with Gabriel for such a long time. If that's what Dean has to deal with on a daily basis...well, Sam's never going to bitch at him for taking a beer with him when he works on the car out back again.

In fact, Sam thinks that he wouldn't mind a drink right now. Except...he still has work to do today. Christ. He rubs his forehead and gets going, hoping that nothing important happened while he was busy.

Why yes, he is comfortable, thank you very much. Four steely-eyed guards who are certain to rip his fingernails off if he even twitches wrong, and the presence of two archangels in the building - who are being incredibly blatant with their shows of power, even if the humans can't see a thing - well. Crowley has always been proud of his ability to keep his composure.

On the other hand, he hasn't been quite so proud of his survival skills lately. Case in point: feather in his sleeve. How'd he get it? Well. Sneaking up on a Fallen

angel is impossible. At least, it is for him. That's why he's smart enough to find a demon both stupid and capable enough to do it.

The problems with his survival skills come in when he decides what to do with it.

Which leads the subject back around to the room he's standing in, and quite frankly? As nervous and as comfortable as Crowley is, he is getting *bored*.

Which is why he is going to die in short order. Because his survival skills are defective.

Really, though, they shouldn't have stopped at four angels. Crowley may not be specialized in physical combat - he's seen the demons that are, and quite frankly he prefers having the brains - but he's got tricks up his sleeve.

It comes down to the locked door, in the end. And even if he hates the lack of finesse, he is more than strong enough to brute force the lock.

A look up and down the hallway and he is set. Entertainment is to be had now, and if he's smart enough he'll corral his survival instincts into working order and *avoid* places and people he shouldn't be in.

And. If he's lucky enough, the archangels won't disembowel him when they find that he's been wandering. Hopefully.

Maybe he should have brought a rabbit's foot while he was at it. Even if he does hate the smell of burning fur.

"Too late now," Crowley mutters, and starts his grand tour of Facility Alpha.

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 6/?

- Jul. 16th, 2011 at 6:14 AM

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 6/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Blasphemy, but nothing beyond that for this chapter.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean. <-- Only listing the main characters as otherwise this'll get far too long as this goes on.
Word Count: 4,816 words, with 17,787 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.

Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

I pause to go :O at the wordcount, as holy carp this story has exceeded expectations. Also! I must point out again that this is an AU fic - very much so an AU fic.

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

It's not long before he's figured out the problem. Not only has Raphael's stop-gap worn off, but quite frankly Castiel has no idea *how* he's supposed to control his emotions. It's well and good to tell him to control them and keep them in line, but Castiel thinks it's something akin to telling him to speak some obscure language without giving him a dictionary.

Castiel studies his hands again, studies the sleeves of the trenchcoat as well, and wonders if the secret to humanity is hidden in the whorls on the skin. Maybe the fingerprints contain an instructions manual on how to resolve anger or fear without giving into it, and if he only knew how to read it...

He's smiling when he lowers his hands. It would have been nice, but he doesn't have the time to follow such silly ideas. There is another patrol he needs to run, and his wings will need adjustments, and -

Demon. Black, smoky oil. He can smell - smell isn't the right word, but - he can tell. There is a demon. Inside the building. Nearby.

A spike of fear, but he has no time for that. None. Where there is one demon there can always be more, and if the defenses are disabled, if no one else is aware of this demon -

Castiel is already to the door and exiting the room, pinpointing the demon's location and making a beeline for it. Male shape, black suit - intelligent demon, then to wear a human shape, and potentially far more dangerous. Castiel has no time for fear, and draws his gun.

"Bollocks," says the demon, raising its hands. "I surrender, don't shoot, etcetera."

Confusion. Castiel hesitates, and there's the flaw, and there's the exact reason why he doesn't want these emotions.

The demon has his wrist, and his grip is surprisingly strong. Castiel thinks he can break it, if he tries.

"My name's Crowley. I've spoken with Gabriel and Raphael already. There's a room with four disabled guards not too far away, and if you'd take me there before eviscerating me I'd appreciate it."

He's not strong, Castiel realizes. Not physically. The fear is gone, but his mind is working.

"Why aren't you dust, if you met with them?"

"Ah, there's the question. I'll talk about it if you walk with me."

Castiel decides that he doesn't want the feel of Crowley's fingers on his wrist anymore, and breaks his grip, stepping back, bringing the gun up.

"Don't move."

Crowley raises his hands and holds still, except to continue talking.

"Are your hands *shaking*?" Crowley asks, eyebrows up.

Castiel grits his teeth and stills his hands. His aim is steady. He doesn't answer. He doesn't want to, not when Crowley has a thoughtful look on his face, and not when he's still figuring out what to do with the demon.

"You don't look like an angel, you seem to be suffering from an actual case of confusion and you haven't immediately opted to go up the food chain for instructions..." Crowley murmurs, then smirks. "Am I looking at something new?"

"I am an angel," Castiel says, and welcomes the anger when it surges in him. Crowley's attitude annoys him, and he doesn't have time to be afraid, not when he needs to decide whether to smite the bastard where he stands or bring him to one of the archangels.

"Oh, I don't doubt *that*," Crowley says. "What is your name?"

"No."

"Common courtesy, to exchange names. I gave you mine."

Castiel debates. It couldn't hurt...could it? Then again, this demon won't live long enough to use the information.

"Castiel."

"Mm. Where have I heard that before..." Crowley lowers his hands to bring them together into a clap, heedless of the gun for a moment. "Angel of Thursday, or one of them, otherwise nothing significant. Which begs the question of why they would choose such a name for you, if you're something new."

"I only need one shot," Castiel threatens. "Hands up."

"Oh, right," Crowley grimaces and brings his hands up. "Better now? If you were going to kill you would have done it already, you know."

Castiel rearranges his thoughts: Crowley is not a physically dangerous demon. He doesn't need to fear that. No, Crowley's weapons are his words, and if he wishes to render him harmless...

"In there," Castiel says, and gestures with the gun. He's made his decision, and now it is easy to act. Back into the room Castiel was thinking in, and quickly.

Here it is possible for him to bind the demon's wrists behind his back and force him to sit. Here he ignores the demon's commentary in favor of loosening his tie and gagging him with it.

Castiel steps back to admire his handiwork: Crowley, gagged with a blue tie and while he may not be properly restrained, it will be enough to slow him down.

Therefore he may safely turn his attention to communications, and summon down an archangel.

It's quite possibly the most beautiful sight Gabriel's seen in a long time: a tie gagging the demon, with Castiel completely innocent of the sexual imagery.

It really helps with his urge to end Castiel's existance, as Dean is right behind him, and it would be a bad idea to do that again. He made his point, after all. No, no: the problem now is the demon. Crowley.

"Are you suicidal?" Gabriel asks. "Or just really, *really* idiotic?"

Crowley glares at him, and Gabriel *knows* that he's aching to spit back some acidic response. Lucky for them both that Castiel gagged him.

Speaking of Castiel: the abomination is standing awkwardly, gun still out and aimed at Crowley, but Gabriel can see how desperately afraid he truly is.

Gabriel can't help the grin: oh, this will be fun. This might be the opportunity Castiel needs to survive, as if he can amuse Gabriel enough, well. There might not be a need to destroy him after all.

"This is a demon?" Dean asks, and Gabriel wants to smack him.

"Of course it is! Can't - oh, right, stupid blind human senses."

"What does he look like to you?" Dean asks, but it is Castiel who answers.

"Stained, foul. 'And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.'"

Even through the gag Crowley's snort is audible.

"Cute, but he's not quite that awful," Gabriel says. "And not a horse, or a lion.

More of a dog. Like the hounds you tried to use on me, eh?" The last is aimed at Crowley, who Gabriel knows if just aching to rip the gag off and growl responses at him. Gabriel just grins at him and glances at Dean once more. "It's all about perspective. Either way we can just tell that they're demons."

"Huh," Dean answers, giving Crowley the stink-eye. "I've never been this close to one before."

"Call it a learning experience, then," Gabriel says and shrugs. "The only thing special about this one is what he's carrying with him."

"Then why can't you guys take it and get rid of him?" Dean asks.

"There's information attached. Which reminds me. Castiel, where'd you find him?"

"In the hallway. Gabriel." Castiel pauses, then lowers his gun, and isn't that interesting? Gabriel tries snapping his fingers and oh-ho, yes, that is the reaction he was looking for: Castiel startling badly and barely managing to jerk his gun down before he gets a proper bead on Gabriel with it.

Crowley may get to wondering about this, but Gabriel could care less right now. If the demon was bored, then here was some entertainment so he'd stay put next time, instead of nearly getting himself killed.

"Gabriel!" Dean scolds, and Gabriel grins at him.

"What? I didn't do anything - "

"Gabriel, I will not hesitate to fire next time," Castiel says, and yes, that is anger bubbling up in his voice, making it deeper, rougher. Gabriel likes it, and decides he wants to hear more of it.

"Next time?" Gabriel asks. "The next time I do what? Snap my fingers? Scare you?"

"Scare me, yes," Castiel says. "It may be a prelude to something worse, and I will not hesitate to act in my own defense."

"And that worked so *well* last time, didn't it? Oh, yes, I remember. You tried to shoot me - which only hit because I was surprised - and then what happened?" Gabriel snaps his fingers again. "Oh, I remember! I destroyed the gun and punched a hole in you before getting down to the real meat of retaliation. Wasn't *that* fun?"

"Gabriel, shut up." Dean growls, but Gabriel's not listening to him. Not when Castiel is bristling with fury and practically ready to attack him again.

"Your casual displays of power are impressive," Castiel says. "But I don't need to fear you. The other archangels do not approve of your actions, and will make sure I survive."

"Mm. Maybe so," Gabriel says. "But can Raphael reach you in time if I really decide that you shouldn't exist? I know you have such faith in him and that repairman, but can they put you back together if all I left of you were *atoms*?"

"You wouldn't dare," Castiel growls in response, and Gabriel can see his grip tightening on the gun. The question he has, however, has nothing to do with anger: is he scaring Castiel badly enough that he would give into the strength the anger brings to such an extent that he would fire, or will he inspire that flight reaction again?

Oh, but it would be fun to provoke Castiel until he gets his answer. Gabriel wants to do it, but here he must show some self-control, and so he doesn't. Instead he turns to Crowley and grins at him.

"You've been naughty, and Raphael's really going to want to give up on this deal if he finds out you were wandering around, so I hope that you don't mind me saving your bacon." He gives Crowley a moment to think about that, then picks him up and slings him over his shoulder. Immediately he itches to wipe out the taint that is Crowley, but he has fine self-control. (It does help to think of the nice long bath he is going to get later, nevermind what hoops he'll have to jump through to get to a real bathtub instead of a basic shower setup.)

It is far, far too much fun to see Dean's face when Gabriel turns around. Gabriel just grins at him and blows a kiss to Castiel and walks out, but not before pausing.

"Castiel, if you want your tie back I'll make sure to give it to Sam next time I talk to the kid."

Then he's gone, and if Dean follows he doesn't care.

The final straw for Sam comes at the front door. The lock is broken, and he has had enough of *everything* today. There's a moment where he leans his head on the door and counts to ten, and then he braces himself and walks inside, expecting to find something stolen, or worse.

He walks inside, ready for a mess. Ready for worse, too, but all he gets - all he *hears* - is the faint sound of someone singing. It's muffled, but it's enough for Sam to set his briefcase down and inch towards it, carefully.

He follows the sound towards his bedroom, and frowns. There's nothing in there, all of his valuable papers are in his study...still, it's where the noise is coming from, and he gets it over with by opening the door. Sam's half-ready for someone to jump out and demand that he hand over all his case, but nothing happens. Except that the song is becoming clearer, and -

"So, if an old friend I know / Drops by to say hello / Would I still see suspicion in

your eyes?"

Is that *Elvis*? It's coming from the bathroom, instead of his bedroom, and Sam can hear the sound of running water.

It's surreal, and Sam is beginning to have suspicions about exactly who has broken into his home.

All he can think is that if it's Gabriel, he's going to murder him, archangel or not.

Sam opens the bathroom door, holding his breath - and oh, lord, he does have someone to murder.

Gabriel's taking a bubblebath in Sam's bathtub, and where the *hell* did he find a rubber ducky? Sam doesn't even *own* a rubber ducky.

"Welcome home, Sam!"

Sam closes the door and counts to thirty. Maybe if he waits long enough Gabriel will go away.

When he opens the door Gabriel is still there. Sam doesn't think angels rust, but...

Hell with it.

"Do you rust? If you get wet?" Sam asks, figuring that if there's any better time to ask questions like this, well, why not now? Gabriel's already broken in and used up all of his secret stash of bubblebath.

"Nope, not me," Gabriel says, and resumes making shapes with the bubbles. "I think Michael does, but don't quote me on that. Depends on the angel, really."

"Why are you here?" Sam asks, deciding not to follow up that line of inquiry. He won't have to deal with rust later, that's all he wanted to know from that question.

"I got covered in demon cooties and a shower won't get them all off," Gabriel says, and gives him a grin.

"Out."

"But - "

"Out!" Sam shouts. In his defense, he has had a *long* day, between the demon and the abnormally large amount of work to do and the scene in Dean's office.

"No," Gabriel says, and lets himself slide under the water. No air bubbles come up, and Sam has the sinking feeling that Gabriel is going to stay there until he's done, and that he won't let anything budge him, short of an archangel or a demon.

Sam entertains the idea of bringing that demon - Crowley, was it? - here, or seeing if he can call Raphael up, then banishes the thoughts. He can deal with this. He can survive Gabriel using his bathtub.

He can walk out of the room and begin work on dinner. Yes.

Sam turns and does just that, and everything goes as planned up until Dean walks in.

"Gabriel's in the bathtub if you're looking for him," Sam says automatically, then stops. He did ask Dean to drop by, right? To talk? And now he's going to derail him for - No, no he will not let that happen.

"Gabriel's what?" Dean asks.

"Nevermind," Sam says quickly. He'll deal with the fallout of Gabriel being around later. "Do you want some dinner?"

Dean gives him a look that Sam doesn't return. He's had enough of Gabriel-related antics for the day. For the rest of his *life*.

"Something I should know about?" Dean asks, and Sam shrugs.

"Later. Please. Dean, I've had a difficult day and there are things I need to talk to you about without that infernal archangel commenting on everything."

"I did talk to him and warn him off of terrorizing you...it didn't work, though, and I'm sorry for that."

Sam shakes his head. "I know what he's like by now. I'm not afraid of him anymore."

There's something to be said about the situation when Dean doesn't tease him for being afraid of the robots, and instead gets a drink, looking thoughtful. Sam thinks that maybe Gabriel has been a good influence on Dean these days, as Dean's definitely been acting more...well, more like an adult these days, even when he's off duty. It's a nice change, but not one that Sam is going to point out to him any time soon.

"Why has he been stalking you in the first place?" Dean asks.

"He thinks I'm interesting, and has decided to make me the subject of some weird experiment he's doing." Sam says with a sigh. "There's something going on that the archangels are hiding that Chuck might not even know about. Or Gabriel's playing a joke on me to turn me paranoid."

"Or both," Dean says, swirling his drink. "What has he told you?"

Sam rubs his forehead. "There's another angel out there that's probably

archangel-class, and it's working with the demons. Gabriel thinks I'm an idiot for jumping to the conclusion that there's someone else out there like Chuck, so...apparently it's obvious to him. And there's more, but.." Sam shrugs, still uncertain of what to make of it all.

The angels aren't real angels, after all, but Sam has to stop. It's the first time he's consciously made the connection in a long time, and here's the problem: the hints Gabriel's been tossing him, they *fit*.

Dean's saying something, but Sam's too busy thinking to listen. He knows it, he knows what's going on now, Crowley's presence only confirmed it...

"Down here...source...god *damnit!*"

Of course it made sense, and of course he didn't think of it. There had been a lot of talk about the angels when they had first shown up, and then a lot of demonstrations that the angels were cyborgs, and for that matter, entirely harmless to humans. But the demonstrations hadn't been done with the originals, the archangels, just those made after, and -

It had been proven and the door had been closed on the subject of 'are the angels truly angels out of religion?', at least for those who worked with the things.

"Sam, what is it?" Dean asked, and Sam came back to reality. Dean was looking far too concerned, and Sam still wanted to swear a blue-streak.

"We've been played for fools," Sam says. "I know what he's hinting at. And it *fits*, he's not leading me in circles - "

"Slow down and talk to me, Sammy."

"They're real angels. The real thing, not cyborgs Chuck made, but the real thing." Sam says finally, afraid to have said it out loud. He's half expecting Dean to laugh at him, or at least share his shock.

Instead Dean says 'oh', and picks up his glass again.

"Does it matter?" He asks.

"Yes!"

"What changes, Sam? If they're really holy warriors, what does it change? There's still a war on, and demons to kill."

"Do you know what this means for - "

"You're *both* being idiots," Gabriel says from the door, and Sam whirls around to face him. Gabriel's got a towel around his waist, the rubber ducky is perched in his hair, and he's grinning. "It means Sam gets a gold sticker for figuring out

my *completely obvious* hints, and that I can finally be straight with you two. Congratulations, you two are the only ones aside from Chuck to get the full skinny. And my brothers can't do anything about it, either."

"...It explains your autonomy, at least," Sam says, in lieu of the dozens of questions that are bubbling up in his mind.

Knowing that Gabriel's a real archangel is almost enough to make Sam get over the fact that Gabriel broke into his house to use his tub. Almost.

"Get out of here," Dean says for him. "Gabriel, I don't know what you're doing here, but you can't stay."

"Aw, you don't want answers to all the little questions crowding around your brain?"

"I can ask you tomorrow."

"Actually, no. Now's the perfect time, you two can eat and chat with me at the same time, and my day will be free for demon negotiations tomorrow. Because no, we're not waiting a week or who knows how long for Lucifer to get back and make the promise with Crowley." Gabriel makes a face. "Too smart for his own good."

"You're derailing the topic again," Dean says, crossing his arms. He's ready to begin the scolding, and he's more than ready to kick Gabriel out, but -

Sam can't help it, he doesn't let Dean get started: "Lucifer's the *Devil*, why is he one of the four archangels?"

"Translation error," Gabriel says, and gets himself a seat at the table. "Everyone sit down, this might take a while."

Dean doesn't move, but Sam gets a seat. There's too much here for him to ask, and more and more his curiosity is overriding his outrage. Gabriel can keep the rubber ducky and hell, even get another bath if only he answers Sam's questions.

"Okay, translation error, care to enlighten us?" Sam prompts.

"It's a famous one that almost anyone who looks up angels knows about, but everyone ignores." Gabriel waves a hand. "I'll give it to you straight. Yes, he and Michael fought. Thing is, we're still family. It was a fight that couldn't be stopped, or avoided. Michael stands for all that's good and holy in the world, and Lucifer's the flip side of that coin. But that was one fight. Yes, Lucifer was punished, and he will probably be need to thrown down again after this war ends, but the circumstances are dire enough for drastic measures. Am I being clear here?"

"No," Sam says finally.

"All four of us are the original four archangels, created at the beginning of time

by God as the first of the angels. We know our roles, and we knew them from the start." Gabriel is speaking quickly, but clearly. Sam is following. "Michael's the oldest, and he represents all that is holy and good about God. Lucifer's second oldest, and he's the flipside of the coin. All that's dark and evil about God."

"What does that make you?" Sam starts with the easiest question. "And Raphael?"

"Backups?" Gabriel shrugs. "Not quite. Lucifer and Michael are going to fight - *have* to fight, their very natures demand it. I'm the Messenger. I find out when and where they fight, and I act in other capacities. It gets complicated, but you should get used to that quickly."

"And Raphael?" Sam asks, wanting both the explanation and a chance to get his thoughts in order.

"Healer. They're going to fight. They're going to fight over and over, and we're all going to fight demons and engage in violent combat. Raphael gets to patch up Michael, and in this case, Lucifer as well."

Sam nods, and is quiet as he orders his thoughts. The next question is delicate, and something he wishes he didn't have to ask a real archangel about, because the answer...

"...All that's dark and evil about God?" Sam finally asks.

There's a long silence, and Gabriel snaps the ducky away before answering.

"There's a balance to everything," Gabriel says slowly, with gravitas. "There's good and bad in you humans, and to use a cliche, every light casts a shadow. Michael fights for everything that's good, and his victory over Lucifer is a resounding victory for creation itself. Call it a metaphor made real, Sam. God triumphs over the evil within himself, and as balance struggles to maintain itself evil grows in power and so Michael and Lucifer fight again."

"And if Lucifer wins?"

"Apocalypse," Gabriel says simply. He lets the word hang in the air for a minute, then claps his hands together once. "Okay, next question?" He doesn't even sound like he's been revealing the secrets of the universe to them barely seconds ago, and Sam can't help but think that's Gabriel's special power: to deliver mood-whiplash like no one else.

"The other angels down here aren't like you guys," Dean says while Sam sits stunned. "They're more like robots."

"Humanity tells a lot of nice stories," Gabriel says. "But the rest of the angels are emotionless creatures whose only purpose is to cheerlead God and when we fight, join in as soldiers so we can have epic wars. That's what makes humanity so special - you guys are like me and my brothers, with your emotions and free-

will, but without the purpose all the stuff that makes us angels. In a sense you're more powerful than Lucifer will ever be, and well...he's the jealous type. Even when he's not the avatar of all evil."

Sam stands up. "I need a drink."

"You have more questions," Gabriel counters. "So sit down and ask while I'm feeling benevolent."

Sam wants to tell him no, enough. This is too much for him to take in right now, and more information...he needs food, he needs a chance to digest what he's been told.

Dean is the one to ask.

"What's really going on, then? With this war against demons?"

"Something no one saw coming, and if God saw it coming, well, I wouldn't be surprised, but none of us got any warning." Gabriel sits back in his seat and looks serious - Sam can't help but think it looks weirdly appropriate on Gabriel's face, even if the mischievous grin fits him better.

The only reason the room isn't silent for several minutes after that is because Dean is used to Gabriel and knows when he needs to prompt him to go on.

Gabriel shoots Dean an irritated glare, then sighs. "I can't have a minute to gather my thoughts?"

"You can't wait to drop another bombshell on Sam, you mean," Dean says. "C'mon, give up the goods."

"Fine. A pair of fallen angels that shouldn't be here are, well, *here*. They're apparently from another place where all of the angels have their own individual personalities, and some Fell because of that. And as we don't have any, they just steamrolled the demons into working for them, and bam. War on Earth, because a pair of arrogant idiots think they can claim real-estate here."

"...Wouldn't they work for Lucifer, or with him?" Sam can't help but ask. His curiosity is continually getting the better of him, and he knows he'll need to corral it again. Soon, hopefully.

"Emphasis on 'arrogant', and repeated emphasis on 'idiots.'" Gabriel shakes his head. "Lucifer knows where he stands. He's still family, and there's nothing here that would require him to land the final blow on Michael once he's won. Punishment or not, he won't let anything change that fact."

Sam frowns. That's... He's never met Lucifer, he can't claim to understand half of this, but something's off. Something about Gabriel, and about this entire thing, but if Gabriel's not about to give up the information on his own, then Sam will have get at it from another angle.

"What was his punishment?"

There. That's definite unhappiness on Gabriel's face, no matter how quickly it is smoothed away.

"Michael's choice," Gabriel says, and Sam notes the use of distancing here. Gabriel had nothing to do with this. "Lucifer was imprisoned in a Cage in Hell until the lead-up for their next fight."

"And?" Dean prompts again.

"He's not the brother I knew." Gabriel says abruptly. "I don't know if we can trust him."

"Did you seriously expect him not to change after being locked in prison for *how* long?"

"We *don't* change," Gabriel snaps. "You don't understand, do you? Humans...surrounded by change all the time..." He's not talking to them anymore, not really. "We wipe out the fallen angels and purge the Earth of demons, and everything's back to normal. Quick and easy. No more conflict, until that fated day."

He looks away from them then, obviously lost in his own thoughts, but things are clearing up for Dean and Sam.

"Castiel," Sam says.

"He's an angel, and he's something new," Dean says. "You're being one stubborn son of a bitch and hurting him because of it."

Gabriel's head snaps up, and there's something dark and dangerous in his eyes. Something Sam doesn't trust, and something that he instinctively fears. He takes a step back, and hopes that Dean won't be stupid enough to go on.

"You idiots do change," Dean says. "You just told me Lucifer isn't the brother you knew."

"Problems on the surface," Gabriel says, eyes narrowed, and opens his mouth to continue but Dean interrupts him.

"Bullshit. Give it up and admit that Lucifer might be a threat here, that Castiel's something new and maybe worth keeping alive, and that you're being a stubborn idiot!"

For a long moment everything is quiet, and everything is still. Sam's afraid he's going to lose his brother, his own life, or both. The lights flicker, and there's tension audibly gathering in Gabriel's form, and then -

He's gone. Just like that.

Dean stares at where Gabriel was, then lets out a long breath of air. Sam holds still, not yet out of the terror's grip.

"That's a trick I've never seen him use before," Dean says at last and shakes his head after running a hand over his forehead. Then he gets up to get himself another drink.

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 7/?

- Jul. 19th, 2011 at 8:10 AM

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 7/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Description of injuries/broken metal.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean. <-- Only listing the main characters as otherwise this'll get far too long as this goes on.
Word Count: 3,581 words, with 21,360 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

A few new POV characters for this chapter, though I can't guarantee I'll use them as POV characters again. Either way: enjoy!

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

Lucifer is a glory of wings in motion, and yet even to the least educated eye it is obvious that he is weary. Metal has been overused and abused, and if it does not gain a chance to rest it will snap.

He has been flying for a long time, and for all of the trouble and unpleasantness he expects at the Facility, it will be good to come to a place of rest.

Lucifer extends his wings once more and if a prayer passes his lips only God hears it. He is afraid that this has gone on too long, and that he truly has managed to destroy these metal wings, and the other archangels have been firm: he is not to reveal that he can fly without them.

Difficulties with temperature causes them to be brittle, he recalls, and wasn't it such a bad time to explain that to Michael? So he darted about the truth and accepted the mission and did not lie.

Yes, he could do this. Yes, he would do this. Yes, he would return within the given span of time. Stop worrying, Michael. You weren't worrying, Michael? Don't lie to me. I don't like lies.

It went like that, see. Lucifer smiles to think of it, and discovers that he aches to smile. The cold spreads with every breath, and he discovers new ways for it to torment him as it does.

He cannot prevent it, and he cannot gain warmth.

There: the roof is in sight, and he may land. Soon.

Lucifer looks over himself once more and does not flinch from the sight. There are obvious stresses in the metal, and his flesh is obviously weakened, possibly sick or unusable. Yet he is still silver-white, and the sunlight makes him shine, and his wings - battered as they are, the dawn's light causes the steel to appear clean, and strong.

He lands abruptly as a wing gives out at last and the snap is a roar to his ears, and then: more pain.

The roof is solid and unforgiving, and his body refuses to move and he refuses to show that he doesn't need it, that he can repair it with but a thought. He refuses to admit his pain, and he does not hesitate before attempting to make it move and stand up again.

For he is Lucifer, and he is proud.

Sam's morning is almost ideal. Up an hour before dawn, peaceful, his morning routine soothing so he can think about the events of the previous day...it is almost the perfect morning.

Then the emergency call comes in. He's in the middle of after-breakfast cleanup when the phone rings, and even as he is thinking that he's in a good enough mood to handle a call from Gabriel, the message itself brings him to a stop.

Lucifer has returned from his mission badly damaged and may not survive the morning without immediate treatment. (Sam has to pause to think: what was his mission? What on earth could hurt an archangel that badly? They rely on being practically invincible, after all.)

On top of that, Lucifer is refusing to let Raphael treat him. The technicians at the scene cannot fathom why he would refuse Raphael's help, and Raphael has

stated that he will not treat Lucifer without his consent.

To put it bluntly: Sam needs to drop whatever he is doing and make his way to Facility Alpha so he can treat Lucifer.

Sam hangs up, and doesn't waste time thinking about it. He can wonder at Lucifer's motives later, at what would - could - damage Lucifer like that, and all of his little trains of thought later.

Lucifer finally lets himself rest, and stops trying to move. Raphael won't touch him, and the fate of this vessel is in human hands now. He can close his eyes and wait, listening to the frantic thoughts around him.

Williams is panicking, thinking 'oh god he is going to die and we can't stop it and oh god it's an archangel why won't he let Raphael help him does he have a deathwish he is going to die we have to stop it oh god' and Lucifer wants to smile at how frantic his thoughts are, how afraid he is.

Raphael is unreadable, but he is there and Lucifer can guess at his thoughts, or at least at what he would say: 'Fool. You cannot mend your vessel without my help, and your opinion of the humans is well known to me. What are you planning? What do you gain from this? Do not expect to get away with it, whatever it is. Michael will intervene.' There is nothing new there, in Lucifer's opinion, and that is why Raphael bores him. The anger may help Raphael maintain composure when speaking with Lucifer, but Lucifer has grown tired of it.

He moves on. Other technicians, other humans...most of them have Williams' line of thought. Some wonder about his mission, some wonder at Raphael, and others wonder at why he is here instead of landing at Facility Beta, where he is usually stationed.

Abruptly the tone in thoughts changes, from panic and confusion to relief, and Lucifer opens his eyes. He cannot read this newcomer, and it is not an answer.

Lucifer looks across the roof at Sam Winchester and feels a familiar tug. *Yes*, his Grace whispers to him. *Yes.*

This is his vessel, then. The human whose body he would be wearing if not for this ludicrous plan involving technology and metal parts. Lucifer cannot help but try to sit up now, to get a better look at his vessel, the single most important human in this time. As convenient as the cyborg vessel is without its need for consent, he cannot help but want Sam to walk over and tell him *Yes, I consent, I am yours*.

His Grace wants it, he wants it, and not just because it is the natural order of things: using his proper vessel would allow him to become a better conduit to his Grace, to his *being* - he would be stronger.

Lucifer forces himself to stop moving, to halt the motion before he can begin it. To close his eyes.

The archangels here, Raphael or Gabriel or both, know who Sam Winchester is. It explains the warding on Sam's forehead, invisible to the human eye but not to his - it explains why he cannot hear Sam Winchester's thoughts.

Lucifer wants to laugh. Oh, what a prize for them to hide here. And here he is, in a condition where he will have no choice but to spend time with the Chief Technician here - Sam.

It's almost as if he planned the whole thing, he thinks, and expects that Raphael will think that as well. It would be best not to correct him, Lucifer decides, as it is easy to predict Raphael's movements when he is suspicious.

There are fingers on his cheek, and he opens his eyes once more, knowing who it is.

Sam Winchester, his vessel, looking down at his broken form.

It's a new kind of damage, one Sam isn't used to repairing: cold. Lucifer is freezing to the touch, and Sam draws his hand back quickly before his fingers freeze to the metal. There are thin lines where the metal has been stressed, and he can see where Lucifer's wings are useless, where the metal has simply snapped.

Lucifer's eyes are cold yet bright, and Sam wants to name the color of them yellow instead of gold, but regardless of their color they are certainly *aware*, and Lucifer is watching him.

Sam is suddenly glad for all the damage Lucifer has sustained, because he is suddenly gripped by fear, the kind of fear Gabriel inspired in him when they first met. It's worse, in a way, because Lucifer is broken, and Sam is still afraid that Lucifer can destroy him regardless of what has happened to his form.

"Remove the wings," Sam says, to break his line of thoughts. He needs to get moving, if he is to save Lucifer, and that reminds him - he whirls around. "Raphael! Why the hell aren't you helping him?"

If Sam dies for swearing at an archangel, he is blaming Gabriel. He has spent too long in that angel's company.

Raphael only narrows his eyes. "Lucifer has forbidden me to heal him. I will honor his wishes."

Which drags a sound that is *wrong* from Lucifer, and yet Sam still identifies it as a laugh.

"Then get out of the way," Sam tells Raphael instead of reacting to the laugh, and whirls back around. He has work to do, and he needs to remember how to effectively treat frostbite before he can begin work on the organic parts of Lucifer.

"Do not think it will happen," Raphael says clearly. "Begin to speak of it and I will rip your tongue from your head."

Sam is going to get dizzy from turning around so quickly. "What?"

Raphael is staring past him, at Lucifer. Sam doesn't have a clue about what Raphael's talking about. Which means it's more secretive angel business that Sam shouldn't know about. Abruptly Sam wishes Gabriel were here, because he would manage to drop more hints, and give him more information, but -

Work. Yes. The technicians have removed Lucifer's wings, and are loading him onto a stretcher. Time to head inside and begin the major repairs.

Sam studies Lucifer's face once more, then follows after the stretcher, simply looking at the damage and assessing what needs to be done.

If Lucifer watches him back, he doesn't comment on it.

Dean's office is bland. Castiel explores it and finds barely any trace of the human who occupies it for most of the day. This is odd, he thinks, and when Dean walks in minutes later in a leather jacket and jeans and the least formal attitude Castiel has ever met -

It is odd. Dean walks in wearing everything that is missing from his office. There are grease-stains on the jeans, he carries himself like a soldier, and he is smiling as he apologizes for his lack of uniform. He mentions his brother.

Castiel decides he likes what he sees.

Dean doesn't let Castiel's presence in his office faze him in the slightest as he walks in, instead offering up idle chatter while he wraps his mind around the question of 'why is Castiel here?'

He still doesn't know what to make of Castiel, and he still doesn't know if he should say anything about something Castiel said last time they met. But then Castiel moves over to the window and says something that makes Dean stop.

"You aren't here when you leave this office," Castiel says. "Why?"

"You mean like photos and all that personal decoration crap?"

"Yes."

Dean pauses, debates briefly on an answer he might give to Gabriel simply to be evasive, and decides against it. "I deal with Gabriel on a daily basis, and don't like to give him too much ammunition to use. I brought in a picture once and he spent a day quizzing me about it before I found it the next morning with a mustache drawn on it."

"I don't think I understand you."

Dean eyes Castiel for a moment, then decides to give him a chance.

"Gabriel. If he doesn't want to talk about something, or otherwise keep me from doing my job, he'll do almost anything to distract me. It doesn't always work, but either way I don't want to give him something to use."

"Ah."

Dean can't tell if that means he gets it or not. He decides to let it go, and turns to another subject.

"You said you can't control your emotions, and that you think you're flawed because of it." Dean says, putting it out on the table. He won't pussyfoot around something he wants to ask.

"Yes," Castiel confirms. Damn, that was what Dean thought he heard. "Am I wrong to think that way?"

"I'd say so," Dean says. "Especially if you're trying to imitate a human."

"Imitate?"

"You're the most human-looking angel I've seen yet. Gabriel literally stole your tie, and if you want it back I'll force it out of him. Castiel, you wear a trench-coat. You can't tell me you're not trying to imitate us."

"I'm not an imitation," Castiel says, and pauses, brows furrowing.

"Something you're not allowed to talk to me about?" Dean says as gently as he can. Because if that's the issue he's going to expose some of Gabriel's misdeeds if only to startle Castiel into talking. He's curious, damnit.

"Ah...I have not been told specifically not to talk about my origins. I may speak to you."

Though you probably shouldn't, Dean thinks. "If your superiors give you hell over this, tell them to sent their complaints to me. I'll handle it."

Normally Dean doesn't try to stir up trouble or learn things he shouldn't. Normally if he doesn't want to learn something, Gabriel will tell him regardless just to make trouble for him. But last night Dean learned far more than he probably ever

should have, and well - why not go for a little more? Michael's going to be pissed at him either way.

Castiel is silent for a long minute, and Dean wonders if he's going to simply leave, or tell him no.

"I am not an imitation," Castiel says. "I am...in a sense human. Closer to being one than my brothers ever will be. I share his memories."

"Share whose memories?" Dean wonders if he should get a notepad, then decides against it. His memory's good, and he's not that nerdy.

"My...ah..vessel's." Castiel looks at himself. "My flesh. Jimmy."

"Jimmy." Dean says, and he absolutely doesn't know what to do with this. "There's a person in there?"

"Yes. No." Castiel frowns. "I...am not certain if I should go on."

Dean thinks he is beginning to grasp exactly *why* Gabriel reacted as strongly as he did to Castiel's existence.

"This would be a bad place to stop," he says. "I'm assuming the worst, and if it's not that..."

"I understand," Castiel says, but he doesn't begin to talk quite yet, instead having a seat across from Dean. If Dean didn't know better he would say that Castiel was fidgeting. He watches Castiel adjust his shirt and tie instead and wonders...he expects that there's not a lot of biological parts left in Castiel, especially after Gabriel attacked him, but that doesn't answer his question: is there a person in there? A living one? Some poor bastard who can think and feel but who isn't in control?

In any case, he understands Castiel's reluctance to speak now.

"Jimmy is not awake," Castiel says finally. "He has been sleeping within me since my creation."

"So there is someone in there."

"I would be unable to exist if there weren't someone in here." Castiel says softly. "Before you ask, Jimmy consented to this."

"Consented..? To what? To his body being mangled and controlled and - " Dean breaks himself off before he begins to yell, because Castiel's calm and quiet little speech has angered him. He wants to yell, and to make a point - he wants to go find Gabriel and tell him that he *agrees* with him.

"His body was already mangled. A pair of angels destroyed the demons who were torturing him and his family but were unable to save anyone except for him. His

body and mind were broken, and that is what led him on the path to me." Castiel says.

"They dragged him back and made him an offer, you mean," Dean says.

"In kinder terms than that, yes."

"Do you realize how *wrong* this sounds? How wrong this entire situation is? A man nearly dies and loses his family and he's turned into...into a *meatsuit* and you're going around complaining because you can't find inner peace." Dean stares at Castiel and is just...Castiel's not reacting. He's just staring. There's not a trace of shame, or anything - "Damn it!"

There's a long moment of silence before Castiel's face twists in confusion. "I...do not know what to tell you." A pause. "I understand grief. My vessel...Jimmy begged me to give him peace. Respite from his loss; his pain. I gave him sleep. Someday he will wake, and I will help him then as best I can."

Dean honestly doesn't know what to say to that. Castiel is really good at killing the mood.

That's when the door swings open and Gabriel comes in, making a beeline to the desk before flopping himself onto it.

"I need to complain to you," Gabriel says, and waves his hand at Castiel without looking at him. "You, shoo! I need the guidance counselor now."

"Give him his tie," Dean says, after a deep breath. "And then get out. We're in the middle of a serious conversation and you're not invited."

"But Dean - "

"Give him his tie."

Gabriel slides off the desk, giving them both the hairy eye. He raises a hand and the tie appears in it, and Castiel proceeds to stare at him.

Dean exhales. This is going to get worse and worse, isn't it? He's not supposed to know that Gabriel can do that, if Castiel's reaction is anything to go by, and Gabriel's attitude is already terrible today.

"How did you..." Castiel breathes, then stops. "Ah...forgive me."

"It's probably something you can do with a little practice," Gabriel says absently, and drops the tie on Castiel's knee. "Now. Shoo. I need to talk to Dean. You can get your therapy session later."

"Were you eavesdropping?" Dean asks.

"No," Gabriel says. "I was making an educated guess. Honestly, are you always

this paranoid? No, wait, you are. Especially if we're talking about me. But this time I wasn't eavesdropping. I don't need to. And I don't want to. Can we move on now?"

"No, we can't. What is with you today, anyways?"

"Lucifer's on the roof which means I have a host of new problems to worry about, Dean. I repeat: Castiel, shoo!"

This time Gabriel snakes his head around to fix Castiel with a piercing stare, and Dean doesn't blame him when he all but runs for the door. The atmosphere's dangerous again, as if Gabriel's about to break out the weaponry, and Dean's half-tempted to pull out a gun, except that he doesn't have one here and it wouldn't work on Gabriel either way.

The door closes behind Castiel, and Gabriel swings back around to face Dean. "Now, to deal with you - "

There are fingers on his forehead before he can blink, and Gabriel is chanting in a language he doesn't recognize.

Dean blinks, and almost jerks his head back, but something in him is sitting up and recognizing a blessing, and the tiny shred of belief in him is basking in the moment.

"What the hell - "

"Nothing demonic about this, Dean," Gabriel whispers, something reverent in his voice, and pulls his fingers back. It's the first time Dean's ever seen him do something truly angelic in all senses of the word, and it's making everything he heard last night come to life in a way it hadn't before.

Gabriel snaps his fingers, and the moment breaks.

"There. You're all protected now. One big privacy curtain around your mind. It's the same kind I put on Sam, so relax. It won't hurt you."

"Privacy curtain?"

"Oh, I haven't told you yet?" Gabriel's slow grin is giving Dean a bad feeling. "Archangels can read minds. And until a few seconds ago, I was in your head. I'm glad you agree with me about Castiel now, by the way."

"You *what* - !"

As Dean is automatically standing up to yell at him, Gabriel's grin widens and he snaps away, vanishing into thin air.

Dean slowly slumps back in his seat. Gabriel's doing this on purpose, he has to be. For a second Dean considers the idea of Gabriel lying, but he dismisses it.

Gabriel wouldn't want to lie about something like that, not when he probably can read minds.

And then there was something else Gabriel said - Lucifer on the roof? That's big. That's way big. Dean should get going, and he should make sure Sam knows what's going on, after he gets the news sorted out.

As he stands up again, a note appears on his desk. Gabriel. He grabs it up and reads it quickly.

Dean,

A few things I didn't mention: 1) the other archangels are probably going to grill you about the new protection. Don't fret, they can't undo it. Not easily, at least, and I'll notice if they try.

2) Lucifer was injured during the mission, and his usual affliction isn't making things any easier on Sam (who is trying to repair him) so I'd stay out of the way of that for now.

3) Michael is coming. Soon.

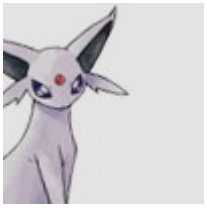
Dean stares at the note and can't explain it. The last line...he's met Michael before. He's a decent guy, for an archangel.

Yet there's a chill running down his spine, and he can almost picture Gabriel's serious face (he's seen it a few times) speaking the words to him.

Soon.

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 8/?

- Jul. 24th, 2011 at 9:02 AM



Title: Cyborg Gabriel 8/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Description of injuries/broken metal/a bit of violence.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean. <-- Only listing the main characters as otherwise this'll get far too long as this goes on.
Word Count: 3,098 words, with 24,452 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

This is the chapter where Lucifer looked at my plot, laughed at it, and made his own changes. I adjusted, wrote on, and as I was bringing the chapter to a close, he looked around and changed things AGAIN. Hopefully I won't take too long before I work out what I'm doing now. :P

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

Sam honestly can't explain it. There's a cold seeping from god-knows-where in Lucifer, and it makes it frankly dangerous to work on repairing him. Metal gets cold enough to be brittle, and his flesh -

"You might not survive this," Sam tells Lucifer as he takes a moment to gather his thoughts. "Can you tell me anything about this cold? Can I stop it? Control it?"

Lucifer's laugh is something Sam hates hearing. He's heard it twice, and no. He does not like it.

"You can't stop it," Lucifer rasps. "I can't control it. Michael's the only one who can truly stop it, and that's - " He stops himself and his mouth closes with an audible click. Sam stares at him for a moment, and he goes on. "Raphael could have helped, but I have had enough. Tell me about yourself, Sam Winchester."

The abrupt change in topic startles Sam, but he recovers quickly.

"No." Sam wipes his hands off with a rag and prepares himself for another go at touching too-cold flesh. "You have had too much of what, Lucifer?"

He doesn't meet Lucifer's eyes, instead selecting his tools. Maybe he can rescue the flesh, and maybe he can prolong Lucifer's existence...though his thoughts do keep straying back to Gabriel's words.

Lucifer's life isn't at stake here, but it's the vessel...if he's remembering right. It might be dangerous to ask about it, yet...

"You're not cold because of anything that happened on this mission, are you?" Sam asks, finally.

He meets Lucifer's narrowed eyes and holds his gaze. He doesn't want to guess at the emotions there, and he doesn't want to think about what he might be giving away in his own gaze. He wants to say something more, something defiant. Which feels wrong, because Lucifer isn't...he can trust Lucifer, can't he? Trust him as far as he can trust Gabriel, or Raphael, or any of them. Right?

"No demon did this to me," Lucifer says finally.

Sam thought so. He looks away. He doesn't want to think about the problems

inherent in trying to cure this. 'Michael can undo this', Lucifer said that, or something to the effect of that. Sam has to wonder: does that mean Michael did it? Does that mean Michael is the reason why Lucifer is cold, cold enough to ruin metal and skin and more?

Sam shivers, and pulls his gloves back on. He needs to work.

"Tell me about yourself, Sam Winchester." Lucifer repeats this. Sam turns back around and decides to indulge this much.

"I'm trying to figure out if I can undo that cold," Sam tells him honestly. "I'm probably going to spend all night thinking about it, and what it means. What on earth do you want to know about me?"

"Anything." Lucifer says. "Everything. I need to know you, Sam."

"Why?" Sam says, not missing the 'need'. "Why do you need to know me?"

"I doubt you would understand."

"Don't pull that now," Sam snaps, and bends to the task of trying to peel back skin from metal without damaging either. "I know what you are."

"Truly." Lucifer says, and his voice is amused. "What am I, then?"

Sam snorts softly. He won't betray Gabriel that easily, and he won't betray the extent of his knowledge that easily, either. Even if Gabriel was lying…even if the story he fed them was wrong in any way, Sam has to trust it. It makes too much sense not to trust it. Even if...

"You know what you are. I'm telling you I know that. Now. Do I need to make an emergency call to Michael? Would he help?"

"He is coming already," Lucifer says. "But not to help me. There is a demon here, and I suspect he will stay beyond that business when he sees the mark on your forehead."

Sam can't help the reflex even as he stops himself from putting his gloved fingers on his forehead.

"Is it visible to everyone, or just you angels?"

"Only the archangels," Lucifer says. "I doubt the fledgling has had a chance to learn how to look yet."

"Fledgling?"

There is another click as Lucifer closes his mouth abruptly.

Sam is forced to give up on the organ. He can't save it. Not with the cold. He pulls

his hands free and disposes of the gloves before washing his hands in warm water - water that was lukewarm when it was brought in, and now feels like boiling soup. Sam hisses in pain.

"You are meant to help me."

"To repair you," Sam says. "Patch you up if you're wounded." He doesn't think about how he can't, not this time.

"Yes." Lucifer is watching him, and Sam wants to look away, is desperate not to stare into those eyes, but this is Lucifer and he cannot. "This body is failing. It will be irretrievable soon. I need another vessel."

Sam stops. Oh - oh, he gets it now.

"I will do anything in my power for you, Sam." Lucifer whispers. "You know what I am. Know that this...metal shell is a pale imitation of everything you are."

Sam understands the boon Gabriel has granted him, now. Did he know this was coming? No, he can not spend time wondering about that now. Here is Lucifer, and Sam knows they can read minds, and he knows - no, he can only guess, but he is certain that he is right - he *knows* Lucifer means to tempt him into...into what? Consent?

"Do you need consent?" Sam asks, but that's it, he knows it's true already, otherwise Lucifer wouldn't have said a word about how he would help him.

"Three letters," Lucifer says. "One word. I give you the world wrapped in a bow."

"I don't want the world." Sam says, shakily.

Lucifer smiles then, or smirks, rather - Lucifer smirks, and a chill runs down Sam's spine.

Sam takes a step back, and this - he stops, freezes in place.

There is the sound of complaining metal, and then Lucifer is sitting up, and there is an echo to his voice that was nothing to do with his voicebox. He is bright silver and white and he is cold and he wants Sam.

"I am Lucifer, the Morning Star, the Light Bringer, and I will have my true vessel. Give me your consent, Sam Winchester." Lucifer speaks as he stands, wings spread impossibly wide - he has no wings, they were broken and left on the roof - and he is whole and -

There is absolutely no way for Sam to say no, and he cannot run.

The word is pulled from his lips against his will - and yet he says it of his own free will, he knows what he is doing when he says yes. An image of Castiel flashes in his mind, a question he never found the answers for, and oh, curse his curiosity.

He wants to know. There's no better way to learn than first-hand experience.

"Yes."

Lucifer smiles, and there is the sound of a loud *crack*, and dust falls from his forehead and - light.

As light overwhelms his senses, as he fades under its brilliance, he sees Gabriel appearing abruptly, and he sees the broken metal form of Lucifer, light gone from its eyes and he sees -

---

This wasn't how it was supposed to go. Gabriel stands frozen as Lucifer curls his fingers and tests the fit of his new vessel.

Gabriel was supposed to feel the blessing he placed on Sam break, and he was supposed to stop whatever would happen after that.

Sam wasn't supposed to say -

"Gabriel," Lucifer says. "That was yours, then?"

"It was," Gabriel admits, reluctant as he is to do so. There's no point in hiding it, however, and Lucifer detests lies.

It is decidedly uncomfortable to realize that Lucifer's vastly more powerful than any of them when he's wearing human skin. Oh, the world of difference a proper vessel makes...

"Interesting," Lucifer says. "It explains why he claimed to know what I am. I assume Michael and Raphael remain ignorant of your meddling?"

"Weeeeelll," Gabriel stalls, unsure of how to go about this. He doesn't want to get Lucifer angry at him, as he wants to stay on Lucifer's good side, and he also really doesn't want to earn Michael and Raphael's ire, so...

Ah, saved by the bell! Raphael appears between them, and Gabriel likes that Raphael's severely annoyed expression is directed at Lucifer, not him.

"This wasn't what you were expecting when I denied your healing, I know," Lucifer gives a little shrug and sigh. "Raphael, please refrain from being difficult. Michael is coming, we all know that. You don't need to be unpleasant."

"There was no good reason for you to take a vessel," Raphael says finally. "You don't need to fight Michael. The world isn't set to end."

"You don't actually expect to destroy the Fallen with those artificial shells, do you?" Lucifer asks. "I've personally faced off against Sammael before."

"You have." Raphael says flatly. "Despite our explicit instructions not to engage in combat with them."

"Yes," Lucifer says, and stretches out his arms. "Sammael is quite possibly strong enough to injure me, even with this new vessel. I'm certain he could and would destroy the rest of you without expending too much of his energy. My point is, Raphael, we *must* discard this foolish charade and take up our true vessels before it is too late."

"I will not deviate from Michael's orders."

"I will," Lucifer says. "And, it seems, so will Gabriel."

"Gabriel is not the focus of this conversation."

"You'll reprimand him later, then." Lucifer shakes his head. "Foolish. With Gabriel's help, inadvertant or not, I have been able to retrieve my vessel, and I know the location of Michael's vessel."

It doesn't take a genius to figure it out, and Raphael has the name on his lips: "Dean Winchester. I am aware."

"We're getting off-topic," Gabriel says. "The point is: with Lucifer vesseled now, we can drop the Castiel project and gain some decisive victories against the demons and the Fallen."

"No, we cannot." Raphael makes an irritated noise. "Castiel's existence has little to do with the demons. I would advise you to take your own advice and stop wasting energy on him and get on with destroying the demons."

"You will have to introduce me to him," Lucifer says to Raphael, and there's that irritated noise again.

"As you are? Absolutely not."

"Hm. Let's test that, shall we?" Lucifer says with a smirk, and oho, Gabriel can see the advantages of the situation now. Lucifer vanishes with the sound of wings - something Gabriel has been missing since this business began - and when Raphael looks at him Gabriel just shrugs.

"You're the one who's upset, so you go stop." Gabriel says, and laughs the second Raphael's gone.

Sure, Lucifer's dangerous now, but he was always dangerous, and Gabriel's used to playing with fire by now.

The wind is not gentle today. Castiel has to fight with it to maintain altitude, and his companion angel on this patrol is struggling just as much, if not more.

Fortunately, there aren't many demons out today, and Castiel can extend a wing to the other angel. It stabilizes their flight, and yet - Castiel can't help but think that he feels lonely on this flight. The other angel is silent, and despite how badly it ended, he can't help but think of Gabriel's excessive banter.

For all it confused him, it had been nice to have a companion. He shakes his head abruptly and scans the treetops below, reminding himself to be vigilant.

Which doesn't help at all when there is an attack from above.

Castiel automatically snaps his wing back in mere seconds before the other angel is crashed into from above, and rolls to the side, quickly scanning the sky before refocusing his attention on the attacker. Whatever it is, it's human-shaped, and - wings? Castiel draws his gun, but not quickly enough: whatever it is, it is fast, and it has flown up into his chest in a mockery of a hug before the world twists around him.

He hears wings, and then - a different expanse of sky. Ocean beneath him. His attacker is executing a complicated maneuver with its wings so that it hovers across from him, and now -

"*Sam*?" Castiel asks, and oh no no no. The demons have laid their hands upon his weakness and for all that he can tell that it isn't Sam, what with the wings and the amused expression, he cannot raise his gun and actually fire.

"Castiel," says the faux-Sam, and Castiel doesn't answer, quickly debating his options. He can cut and run, he can attempt to subdue the enemy -

"I am no demon," says the faux-Sam. "Raphael should be embarrassed. Perhaps it would help if I had retained the shell, hmm?"

Castiel makes his choice and lunges at the enemy, but not before his wrist is caught and the faux-Sam is tsking in disapproval.

"We haven't met. Castiel. I am," his lips twist here, "WCA zero-zero-beta, to use that repulsive naming scheme. I suspect Michael thought it up himself. You will call me Lucifer if you know what's good for you."

Castiel stops, staring. Because...a demon wouldn't lie about that. Wouldn't know what to lie about. And it is true, Castiel can't feel the taint on him, but Sam's visage had -

He feels like hitting himself. Raphael's words: 'if the question is, can they do it, the answer is always yes'. Of course Lucifer could wear Sam's face if he so wished. The question now, Castiel thinks, is *why*.

"Lucifer," Castiel says finally. It might be dangerous to ask. He doesn't care. "Why are you wearing Sam Winchester's face?"

"Because Sam Winchester is my true vessel and that metal shell finally broke. I discarded it, accepted Sam's consent, and if all goes well I will return him in good time."

Confusion, annoyance: why must every archangel he meet leave him dumbfounded and feeling like an ignorant child? He doesn't let it show, or tries not to. Lucifer's lips still twist in amusement.

"I came to speak with you," Lucifer says, and now that Castiel knows what to look for, he can see that yes, it is Sam Winchester. There are motions that indicate metal under the skin, even if they are faint and difficult to detect, and Lucifer is showing none of those.

There is the problem that of course Lucifer might be able to hide those signs if he wanted to. The only way Castiel can be sure is -

"Castiel. I detest lies." Lucifer says. "Keep that in mind when you speak with me."

Castiel pauses. If that's true, then he can trust Lucifer's word. And if it's not...

"Raphael will be here shortly," Lucifer says. "He will inform you that this is true. Unfortunately, I need to leave before then, as he is quite displeased with me."

"Is...there a disagreement going on?" Castiel asks. He's not sure he wants to know, and he's sure he doesn't want to be involved.

"Yes." Lucifer says simply. "I should inform you. If you want to speak with Dean Winchester I recommend doing it soon, as Michael will soon be upon us and I suspect he will want his vessel just in case I decide to get violent."

"Wait - " Castiel says, but Lucifer is gone. There are numerous questions whirling in his mind, and the moment Raphael appears, Castiel turns to him and asks the first question that comes to mind. "Raphael, does Lucifer lie?"

"No," Raphael says, and, "Where did he go?"

"He just left," Castiel says, and he has more questions, especially now that he has that one answered, but Raphael is gone again.

The wind kicks up again, the moment Raphael is gone, and Castiel shivers with the chill. He smells salt, and the sea, and knows that he is probably miles from land and even further from Facility Alpha, and he cannot teleport like the archangels can.

He has a long way to fly.

Sam is cold. It is as simple as that. He is cold, he cannot move, and yet - he cannot say he regrets his decision.

Lucifer whispers to him, gives him commentary when he speaks, and Sam is gaining an understanding of things that he suspects man was not meant to know.

He feels everything, too - the crunch of metal as Lucifer slams into a lesser angel, the warmth of Castiel's skin, the ever-present cold -

Why are we fleeing from Raphael now? Sam thinks, and wonder of wonders: Lucifer answers him.

I don't want to fight him yet.

Here Sam is so close to Lucifer that he can hear how the 'yet' is tacked on as an afterthought, and he can feel the sudden flare of protectiveness that arcs through Lucifer.

You're close to them. The archangels, I mean.

Before this war I had not spoken with any of them in over two thousand years. Lucifer says dryly, then whispers a *yes*.

Sam's first instinct is to ask why, and how, but he can still feel the feelings Lucifer has towards his family and he gets it. It's why he murmurs *Dean* to himself, and it's why -

Why he doesn't understand the sudden bitter laughter from Lucifer.

What? Why are you laughing? Sam asks, and Lucifer runs a hand over his face.

Because this is a cruel world, Sam Winchester. Because I know who Michael's true vessel is, and if this comes to blow...

Sam connects the dots. Sam doesn't like the picture.

Dean, Sam whispers. *Oh, god. Would either one of us die if we fought?*

It will do you no good to call out to Him, Sam. And the answer to that question? If Michael wins a victory, he will slay me. I doubt he will preserve you. But you have more pressing problems at hand: I intend to journey to Hell, now.

You WHAT?! Sam yelps, but it is too late for him to talk Lucifer out of it. He can already feel Lucifer folding his wings and readying himself, and he can feel reality warp around him.

The last thing he sees through Lucifer's eyes before they are gone is the ocean and Raphael appearing too late to stop them.

[fic] Cyborg Gabriel 9/?

- Aug. 1st, 2011 at 8:20 AM

Title: Cyborg Gabriel 9/?
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG-13ish.
Warnings: Violence, descriptions of injuries.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel, Castiel, Sam, Dean. <-- Only listing the main characters as otherwise this'll get far too long as this goes on.
Word Count: 4,647 words, with 29,107 total so far.
Summary: Archangel Class Cyborgs are terrifying in combat, and practically unknowable off the battlefield. Castiel's an experimental unit with an unusual design, and he's caught Gabriel's interest.
Note: I refer you all to the first part of this cyborg story for notes and whatnot.

Apologies for the delay! I was sick this week and thus couldn't write much at all. I must note that in lieu of this, you're all getting a nice long chapter. I hope you enjoy it, and I'll try to have the next one up soon.

Warning! This is still a WIP and while more is coming within a day or two, you should read this at your own risk. If you're cool with that, then, read on!

"Oh, good," Gabriel says. "I was afraid we were going to have to wait a week before you showed up." He's not looking at Michael, and honestly? He's a little afraid. Michael has never been kind and merciful, and Gabriel's been up to activities that Michael's not going to approve of.

He thinks, suddenly, that it would be convenient if he had a human vessel, as then he could pour a drink, offer Michael some snacks. Some little distracting activities, to put off what's coming.

"Gabriel," Michael says, and Gabriel turns around. No backing down or hiding from this now. "I want you to give me your side of the story."

Gabriel holds back a sigh and nods. Just like Michael to be fair and honorable about this, and to make him wait for any consequences.

Well. Nothing to do about it now. It's not like he can cut and run, and Michael's not going to let anything distract them now.

"Where do you want me to start?"

Crowley, to be completely honest, doesn't like this. There's far too much activity

and he can't find out what's going on without putting himself at risk, and he's not yet ready to risk himself again.

The guards are fewer, now, but that doesn't reassure him at all, as that means the archangels are secure with the lax security, and that -

It means they don't fear him. Which is probably a good thing, but he can't be sure about that. He can't be sure about anything in this place, except for perhaps Lucifer's infamous hatred of lies.

Crowley stands up from the desk. For all the activity and the lax security, it would be easy - almost too easy - to get away with sneaking out, probably. But right now he's got a different plan.

"Call Gabriel," he tells a guard. "I have a complaint."

"Your request will be relayed," says the angel, and Crowley paces. There's no guarantee Gabriel will come, and it's likely Gabriel will take a while to get here even if he does decide to come, but then again -

He is dealing with creatures that despise him simply because of what he is. It's unpleasant, but that's the simple truth of it.

"You are the perfect excuse," Gabriel says, and Crowley has to fight with himself before he can properly mask his surprise. He appeared out of nowhere, and as used to Crowley is to the sight of angels at the moment, the mere presence of an archangel makes his very essence scrabble at the edges of his vessel to get *out*. It's the same fear he felt around Orias and Sammael: the primal fear of meeting a creature that can destroy you with barely any effort at all.

"An excuse for what?" Crowley asks. "Skipping out on your duties, now?"

"Oh, no. No, nothing like that. Just Michael grilling me for answers when I already told him everything he needed to know, nothing serious. If he comes running in here then we can distract him with that feather."

"Michael is here," Crowley says, as calmly as possible. Inside he is *not* happy, nor calm. Michael's presence here is a very bad thing indeed, because what he knows about Michael is that he does things as by-the-book as possible, and dealing with a demon, even an incredibly helpful one (if Crowley may say so himself), is a big moral grey area that's sure to grate against Michael's nerves.

"Uh-huh. He flew in about an hour ago, and I've been engaged in questions and answers since he got here. But enough about him. You sent a message wherein you claimed you had a complaint. Well, I'm here, and I'm willing to listen to it. Can't promise that I'll do anything about it, but them's the breaks." Gabriel sits on the table and puts his hands on his knees and looks expectant.

"Lucifer's taking too long." Crowley says after a pause. "I'm really not comfortable here and I'd like to make this deal and get it over with as soon as possible."

"About that, actually..." Gabriel makes a face and swings his feet. "That's part of Michael's here. Lucifer's already come and gone, and we simply didn't get a chance to bring him in. Think you'd feel comfortable with Michael? He's honorable and likely to keep his word, usually."

That wasn't an option. "No." Crowley didn't have to think about it. No, not when his mind was already racing onto other matters. Lucifer gone? Already? And Gabriel implied that Lucifer was making trouble, which meant that he would be here for quite some time. And dealing with Michael was out of the question. Raphael even moreso. He wouldn't mind making a deal with Gabriel, but: would the other archangels respect it and leave him alone?

Perhaps there was a way out of this mess, if he could think of it. Alter the terms of the deal, make an arrangement with Gabriel.

"You look amusing when you're deep in thought," Gabriel comments. "But let me put a few things on the table while you're thinking."

"Go on."

Gabriel grins at him. "Don't look so suspicious, pet."

Crowley narrows his eyes and almost calls Gabriel out on the nickname. Oh, he did not like that at all, and he knew Gabriel knew about that. Wasn't it just his luck that the archangel who was most approachable also happened to be a right bastard?

"I need some favors done," Gabriel says. "A few favors that I really shouldn't be caught doing."

"There is absolutely no reason for me to risk my neck for you."

"There are plenty of reasons." Gabriel says. "Dozens and dozens of reasons!"

"Give me one good one," Crowley says. He doesn't want to say this, and he doesn't want to think about how he's actually considering it. He's in this situation in the first place to *avoid* danger, not get into more of it.

"One angel ordered to act as your bodyguard regardless of the situation." Gabriel leans forward. "One that could last for more than ten minutes against one of us archangels. How's that sound?"

The idea is suddenly incredibly appealing. The idea of it, at least. But Crowley's not a fool, and there are bound to be strings. And there's still the question of what Gabriel wants in return. He doesn't need it, but he breathes in before he asks the questions that are going to let Gabriel know that he wants this.

"How do you know this angel could last against one of you for ten minutes?" Crowley asks.

Gabriel leans forward, and for a moment Crowley can see under the metal shell. Intentional or not: what he sees is terrifying. Far too much light for him to bear, a quality that is undefinable but threatening, one that he knows is anathema to his being. An unshielded glimpse, a look into that sunlight, and he'd be toast. Poof.

"Because he tried to fight me," Gabriel says. "It wasn't exactly effective, but he did last ten minutes. And of course by then I had to take measures, and it took even longer. I gave him points for tenacity."

Crowley feels muscles untense as Gabriel leans back and the shell is back in place. He's no longer looking directly at the sun. "The angel you were provoking," Crowley says. "Castiel."

"One and the same." Gabriel's grin is expectant.

"What do you want for him?"

Gabriel's grin widens.

Castiel is still en route to Facility Alpha and over the ocean when reflexes kick in barely seconds before an archangel sails past him in a dive.

"Close!" Gabriel calls up, and then he is up and hovering across from Castiel, wings moving in that distinctive figure eight pattern. "Good reflexes, Castiel."

"Why are you complimenting me?" Castiel can't help the defiant remark even as he says it, and oddly enough he is not afraid. Gabriel is arrogant, he can see that now, and there is no reason for Gabriel to be here, unless Gabriel is here on a whim.

Gabriel's whims have not been kind to him in the past.

"What, I can't compliment you?"

"I have not forgotten your actions."

"You seem to have forgotten that you provoked my reaction. There I was, engaging in some idle conversation when my conversational partner turned tail and ran, and when I follow to see what was wrong, said partner turned and tried to *shoot* me. Can I be blamed for my reaction?"

"Yes," Castiel says.

"It's technically exactly what went down."

Castiel lifts his chin, disbelief evident on his face. "We were both there, Gabriel. Please do not behave in such an insulting manner towards me."

"You do remember what happened after you tried to shoot me, right?"

"I will not retract my words, or apologize for them. Do not stoop to bullying, Gabriel. It is childish."

"This calls for a change in topic!" Gabriel says with all the grace of a sore loser. "In fact, I actually came out here to do something other than poke at you. I have an assignment for you!"

"Does Michael know about this assignment?"

Gabriel clears his throat. "Archangel. Ranking officer. Walking arsenal. You've had enough leeway, now can we get on with business?"

Castiel takes that as a 'no, I haven't, and Raphael doesn't know about it either.' He nods, and resumes his flight. There is no reason to stay and be threatened.

"Castiel," Gabriel says, tone warning.

"I am returning to the Facility to await my next assignment, one approved by ranking officers. Excuse me." Castiel says, and keeps going. If he suffers for this, well. He has been through Gabriel's wrath before, and if Gabriel does have something he wants Castiel to do, then it would do him no good to get violent.

Not to mention that Castiel knows that Raphael disapproves of Gabriel's actions. That can act as protection, surely?

He's almost expecting it when Gabriel appears in front of him without flying there, pulling some form of trick that Castiel doesn't understand yet.

"Castiel, shut up and listen to me," Gabriel says. "This is serious."

"Serious or not I cannot trust you," Castiel says. "Gabriel, please refrain from including me in your plans."

"Remember that demon?" Gabriel presses on. "The one we're working a deal with?"

"Yes."

"Thanks to Lucifer making a hit-and-run, we can't complete the deal, and we need that information he's got. You may not care, but we do, and right now you're my ticket to getting him to comply with us."

Against his will Castiel is compelled to ask: "What do you want me to do?"

"Babysit the demon. Keep him alive. Keep me informed of what he's up to, and stop him if he does anything *really* stupid, like try to double-cross us."

It sounds almost palatable. Castiel actually considers it, before he begins to probe for the strings. "Why would he consent to this?"

"I told him that he'd be getting a bodyguard who would protect him regardless of the situation, and he's arrogant enough to think he can get away with whatever he wants with you. And," Gabriel smirks. "Before you ask, I tossed him the bone that he'd be getting an angel who could survive against an archangel for at least ten minutes."

Castiel narrows his eyes. That implies that he may be forced into a situation where he would be required to fight an archangel. That reminds him that he really shouldn't take this assignment.

He resumes flying, ducking under Gabriel and continuing, but then there is a weight between his shoulders as Gabriel drops onto him. A hand grips the back of his neck.

"If you honestly want me to, I'll take you to Michael right and now and accuse you of insubordination. I'll even explain my orders, and guess what? He won't be happy. And if I'm lucky enough, he'll be unhappy enough to agree with my opinion and end you. End this entire stupid project."

Castiel freezes, barely moving his wings enough to stay aloft.

"Then - " He has to calm down. "Then Jimmy would - " He *has* to avoid panic, he has to -

"Be finally laid to rest, eyup. It's far overdue, too." Gabriel's avoid is bored but amused. "I'm telling you my orders again. You gonna follow them?"

Castiel's breathing has increased, and it's too late: he's too scared to do anything except bow to Gabriel's will. And that's right, he can't be too reckless, because - for all his injuries and the risks he takes, he cannot afford to die. For Jimmy's sake, if nothing else.

"Smart of you, Castiel," Gabriel comments from above him, and Castiel hates the satisfaction in his voice.

Dean's hefting a box full of papers that might explain more than a few things and he's walking down the hall, and that's when a number of things interrupt him at once. First, there's Williams:

A hand on his shoulder, stopping him in his tracks. "Sir?"

"I've told you before, it's just Dean," is out of Dean's mouth before he realizes who it is. "Oh, hey. What can I do for you?"

"Do you know where Sam is?"

Dean shifts the box so he can turn and get a look at Williams, then decides to screw it and he sets the box on the floor with a thump. "No, I don't know where he is. I thought he was still working on Lucifer."

"Oh, um, he's not." Williams is poking his fingers together and looking incredibly nervous, and while Dean's used to the guy being nervous, this feels different. Like there really is a problem. "You know how he has that bad habit of everyone leave the room when he's working?"

"What happened?"

"We - that is, I - don't know. Leroy might have a clue, but um - see, I was just bringing down a message about the logs from the tower, and he had done it again, and Chen was standing outside and pacing and she's the one who filled me in before I went to Dent for the rest of it and - " He's babbling, and this is taking too long. Dean tries to be patient with him, he really does.

"Williams, calm down and *tell* me what happened."

"Lucifer's dead." Williams spits out, before going on too quickly to let Dean process that. "Or non-functional or *something*. They let me have a look at him, but he just looks deactivated to me, but...either way it's a freezer in there. As in, I was getting numb just from standing in there."

That's not good. That's not good at all. Dean rearranges his priorities back to where they should be: "Where's Sam?"

"That's just it! We don't know, no one saw him leave, the cameras in the hallway show nothing, and the cameras in the room itself are broken from the cold, and there's no useful footage there. And it's not like there's a window or a vent or anything he could sneak out of, and he really shouldn't have a motive for something like this, should he - "

"Sam's not a criminal here," Dean says voice rough. "The bastard did something to him."

"But Lucifer's - "

Dean crouches to pick up his box. "Sam's in danger here. Let me remind you that Gabriel's a loose cannon and can disable cameras, *and* he's been showing an interest in Sam lately." Dean doesn't believe for a second that Gabriel's at fault here, but it's not like he can go and tell Williams that the archangels can teleport now. Or that they're exactly what they named themselves. "I'm going to my office. Call me if anything turns up, okay?"

"Ah, yes sir!"

Dean lets that one go, and makes a beeline for his office. He needs to talk to Gabriel, and he needs to talk to the bastard *now*.

Raphael watches the human scurry past him in the hallway, watches Dean Winchester enter his office, then refocuses his attention on Michael. "You're certain he'll consent to this?"

"I'm the only hope he has of getting his brother back alive," Michael says. "Once he understands that, he'll say yes."

"You overestimate these humans," Raphael says quietly. If Michael has any faults - any he doesn't - then one might be considered to be his respect for specific humans. "We may need to demonstrate - "

"No," Michael cuts him off. "That will not be necessary."

"Handling Gabriel for that length of time does not mean he's particularly smart," Raphael points out. "It means he is stubborn, or foolish, or worse."

"He retains the respect of his coworkers and continues to attempt to manage Gabriel. I am certain that Gabriel could and would have driven him to apathy or social ruin by now."

"Stubborn," Raphael repeats.

"I would expect no less," Michael says, and uncrosses his arms. "He is my vessel, after all." He nods to Raphael and approaches the door to Dean's office.

Raphael watches him for a moment before following. He's not going to protest any further. Michael has his warning, and well - he does have more important concerns. He can trust the business with Lucifer to Michael, and otherwise remain uninvolved unless Michael orders otherwise. It's an ideal arrangement, in Raphael's opinion.

The door opens without fuss, and Michael walks in, Raphael just behind him. Raphael looks around the room, noting Dean standing still behind the desk, half-bent over it as he finishes setting the box on his desk.

"Michael," Dean says, straightening as he wipes his hands on his pants. "Gabriel's not here right now."

"I can see that," Michael says, gaze steady. He almost says something else, but Dean jumps in.

"Where's Sam?"

"With Lucifer," Michael says, not missing a beat. "You've met Castiel." It's not a question.

Raphael can see Dean's mind working, and he sees the moment Dean figures it

out. Even with Gabriel's unnecessary protection he can read Dean easily - he's not very good at hiding what he's feeling, or thinking.

"Son of a bitch," Dean says, and Raphael holds back a smile.

"Lucifer broke down so he stole my brother," Dean says.

"You should be aware that we may only take on vessels with consent that is freely given."

Raphael glances at Michael, and wonders if that was the right thing to say. He glances back at Dean and well. Dean is giving that a lot of thought, and ah. It was the wrong thing to say.

"Which one of you bastards is expecting me to let you do that to me?"

Raphael was afraid of this. He hopes Michael knows how to deal with this, because anything he can think of to convince Dean to consent will probably fire off more and more of Dean's defensive instincts, and that -

"I am." Michael says. "I want to rescue your brother from the Hell Lucifer is surely putting him through."

"You don't know a thing about my brother," Dean snaps. "I am not handing my body over to you."

"You will," Michael says. He is unruffled. "You need me, Dean. Lucifer is not someone you can fight and hope to win, and you're going to need to do more than win against him to get your brother back in the process."

"I don't need your help," Dean says. "I don't need the help of the bastard responsible for Lucifer being free and able to get at Sam in the first place."

"Excuse me?"

"Lucifer's not in Hell because you sons of bitches thought you could control him and use him in this war as a weapon. There is no way I am letting you have my body. I'll get it back in pieces, or not at all."

Raphael doesn't say a thing. Dean's prediction is probably right on the mark, too, as Michael is not exactly gentle on his vessels. Not that they're down on Earth often, but for the times they have been...

"Do you know where Lucifer is right now?" Michael asks. "Do you understand what your brother is facing right now?"

"No," Dean admits.

"Lucifer has gone to Hell, and will be fighting demons and, I suspect, the instigators of this war themselves. While he is much more powerful while riding

his vessel, he will take damage." Michael studies Dean's expression, and goes on. "Renegade or not, if I had you I would fight at his side so that we could both return safely, and then I would evict him from Sam. Your brother."

"I can't trust that."

"I am unlike Gabriel."

"I'd trust Gabriel over you." Dean says.

Raphael bristles at that, because that - that is a blatant insult that he will not stand for, and when he takes a step forward he is half-expecting Michael to touch his arm to stop him, but even so he wants to defy Michael's will and hurt Dean for that.

Raphael stills himself and looks at Michael, waiting now.

Michael opens his mouth.

Whatever he would have said is aborted by Dean beginning to speak, and then by Raphael lifting his head - "Demons," he hisses. "A multitude - "

"What are you - " Dean tries to ask.

"Michael, let me have them," Raphael says. "You can continue this conversation."

"I was going to bring Dean with us," Michael says mildly.

"No, Michael, *let me* have them," Raphael says, and he does not care if Dean sees his sudden need. He is a warrior of God, meant to purge the Earth of demons, and he is not meant for this human drama. "Let me fight."

Michael studies him, and Raphael does not care if he sees this in him.

Raphael feels only relief when Michael finally nods, and then he is gone from the office. He cares not a whit if Michael alerts the humans and summons the soldiers. The point is: he has the battlefield first, and he gets the pick of the targets.

He obliges their cover by walking up to the roof, and he obliges it further by going through the motions of letting them have their communications log, and the second he is in the air he stops obliging them and takes off for the nearest stain.

It is far too easy to find the demons, and he *enjoys* the shrieks of pain and terror he leaves in his wake as he cuts through the lesser troops, not taking the time to make them clean kills, not when this is one of the few times when several generals have drummed up their entire legions and pooled their resources in an assault. He has many demons to kill, and he has certain demons to hunt out specifically, as they are the ones behind this.

There are billions of lesser demons, but he can cripple Hell's forces if he removes the higher demons, the ones with the brains to coordinate this.

Raphael lets out a roar, caught up in the thrill of battle, caught up in the thrill of rending flesh from bone. He will need to spend time later cleaning his metal shell, as it is stained with the blood and ichor of his foes, and he does not care: there go several legions of demons riding under Flauros' banner, and with luck he will find Flauros itself soon enough.

He fights with sword in hand, disdainful of ranged weaponry, and only uses his heavier weaponry when the numbers of demons swell beyond comfortable limits, and then he punches hole through the swarms with bright blasts of holy light.

Raphael continues to cut through the numbers, and it is telling that there are more than usual when he begins to get more creative with his tactics. He is growing bored at the lack of a stronger enemy, and well - numbers are not enough, not when he can gather his Grace close to himself and charge it with the human-created energy he carries in his metal shell and release it to clear out the sky.

"Raphael!" He hears, and slows his motions so that he does not accidentally disembowel the one who is calling him. He turns, and looks.

What stops his actions altogether is the familiar ring of Grace that pulses around the figure who is calling him, and what causes him to raise his blade is that he recognizes the figure: Orias, one of the two Fallen.

"Orias!" Raphael calls across the sky, wings moving to hold him aloft and steady in the air. "Stand down and I might spare you!"

Orias wears a human shape, and Raphael studies it as he hovers, unwilling to approach and equally unwilling to back off. Blond, tall, an expression that conveys innocence - attractive, in a word. Raphael believes that he chose such a vessel on purpose, and would not be surprised to discover that it was for the purposes of using humans more readily.

What marks him as a Fallen is not the taint to his Grace (which he has), but the black-blue of his wings, visible even from long distances. Raphael will not deny that he aches to sever them.

Yet, he remembers Michael's orders. He is not to slay Orias, not without Michael's word, and if he meets the angel, he is to capture him, or wound him.

Orias holds his hands out and up, palms up, and flies towards Raphael. Raphael doesn't trust the gesture for an instant.

Here is one of the two Fallen angels who caused this war, and here is one of the reasons he is fighting here and now. The only reason Raphael will not leave him as a bloody stain across the sky is because of Michael's orders. Raphael bares his

teeth and flies towards Orias, his blade unsheathed and held in front of him.

He is surprised at how calm Orias' face is when he stops, and he does not lower his blade from Orias' neck. He thinks that they are too prideful to surrender, and narrows his eyes. What is the trap here? What is he planning? It would be safer to run him through and bring the corpse to Michael.

"I want an audience with Michael," Orias says, voice clear. If he is afraid he does not show it, even though Raphael's blade touches the tip of his throat. "I need to talk to you, and I need - " here he starts to say something else before closing his mouth with a snap. He starts again. " - Sammael to believe that I am captured, or dead."

And Raphael knows what this is now. It is either a trap, or it is the other flaw that he finds in demons all too often: ambition. Orias wants to win this war, and Raphael would not be surprised to find Orias' blade in his back once he convinced them all that he was an ally.

"I will never trust you," Raphael says, and lowers his blade. "Do you want to be crippled? I would be happy to leave evidence of your death in the hands of the demons."

"He's not a fool," Orias says. "And I don't want to lose a wing. Capture me, Raphael, and do not cripple me."

Raphael narrows his eyes, then lashes out, severing Orias' left hand at the wrist.

"I do not take orders from prisoners," he says, and is surprised to see relief in Orias' eyes, even as the Fallen clutches at his arm.

Orias' next words surprise him further: "Thank you, Raphael. I expected worse from you."

"Hmph," Raphael says, and sets to binding the angel. Michael will be pleased, even if Raphael feels a pang of regret - he would not have minded a chance to test Orias' skills in battle.